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Brilliant in Bilbao

Matthew Sadler
rereads Nimzowitsch

Wesley So wins Sinquefield Cup (and tops the Grand Chess Tour)

Judit Polgar
Careful with computers

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in Iran

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Opposite-coloured bishops can be fun

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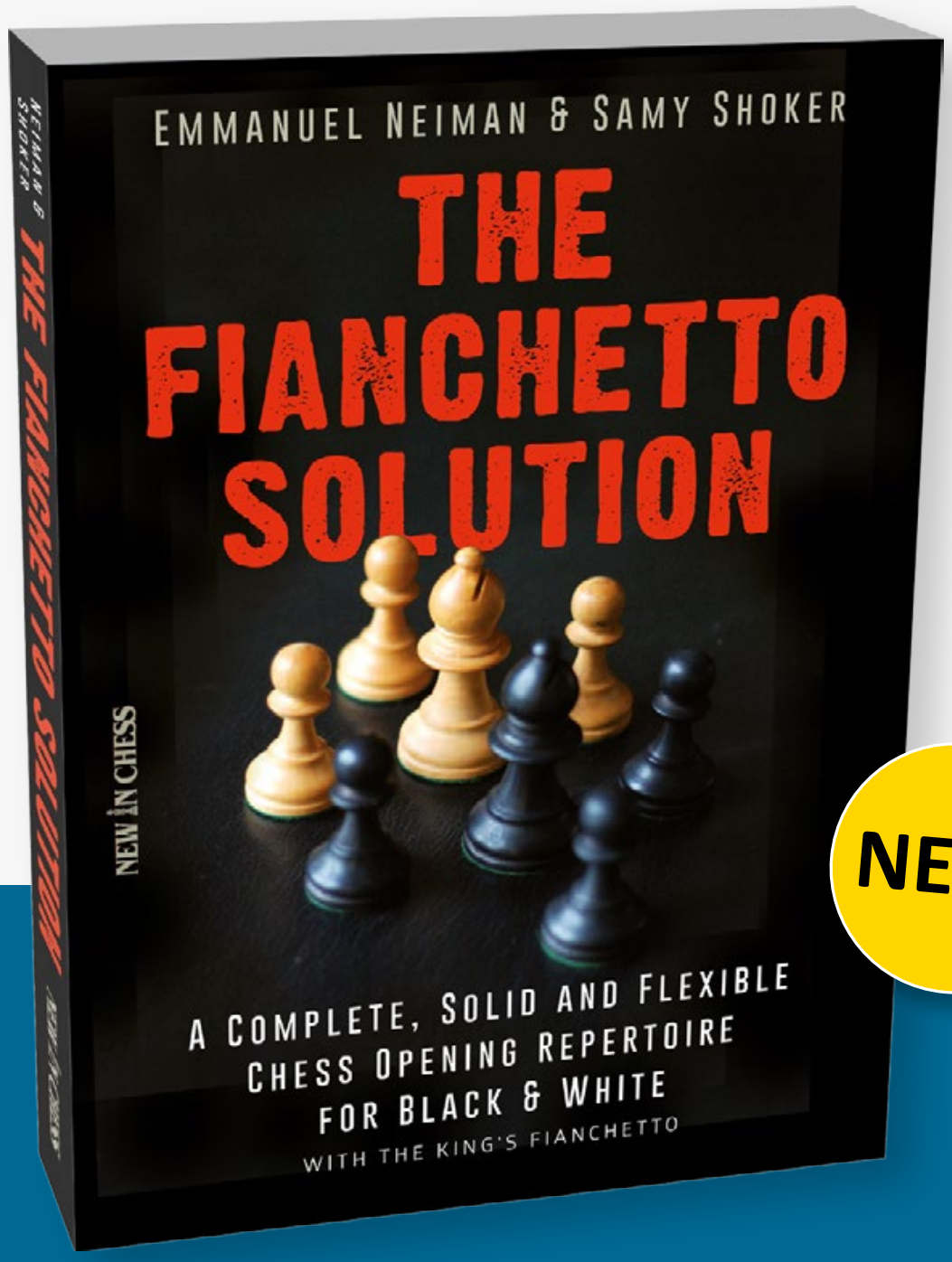
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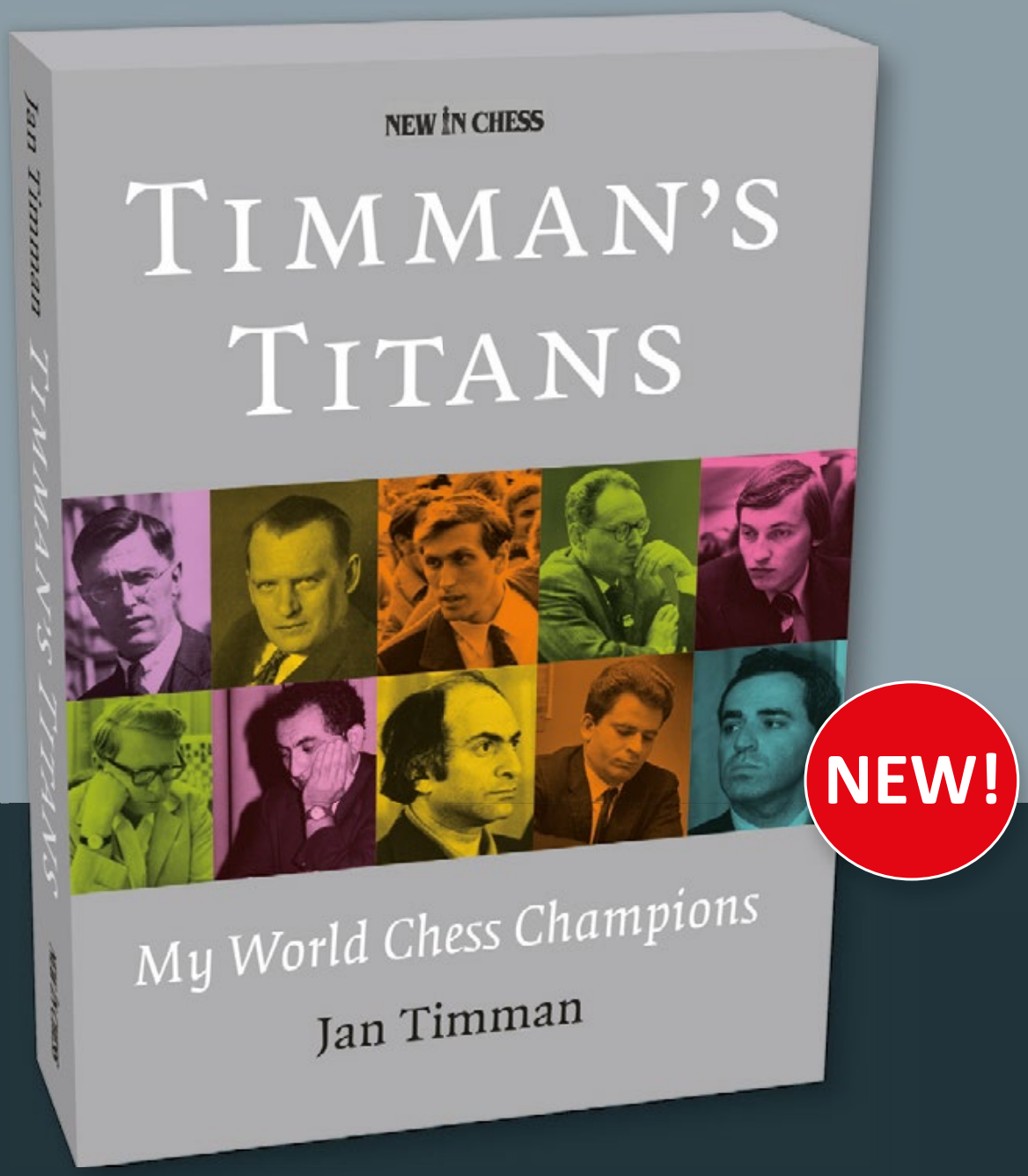

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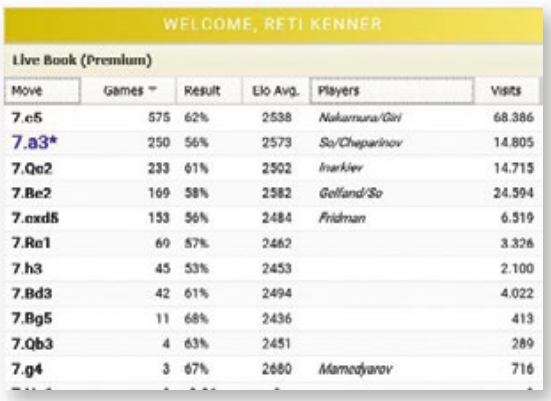

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Live Book (Premium)

Move	Games	Result	Elo Avg.	Players	Visits
7.c5	575	62%	2538	*Nakamura/Giri*	68.386
7.a3*	250	56%	2573	*So/Chepurinov*	14.805
7.Qe2	233	61%	2502	*Inarkiev*	14.715
7.Be2	169	58%	2582	*Gelfand/So*	24.594
7.cxd5	153	56%	2484	*Fridman*	6.519
7.Re1	69	57%	2462		3.326
7.h3	45	53%	2453		2.100
7.Bd3	42	61%	2494		4.022
7.Bg5	11	68%	2436		413
7.Qb3	4	63%	2451		289
7.g4	3	67%	2680	*Mamedyarov*	716

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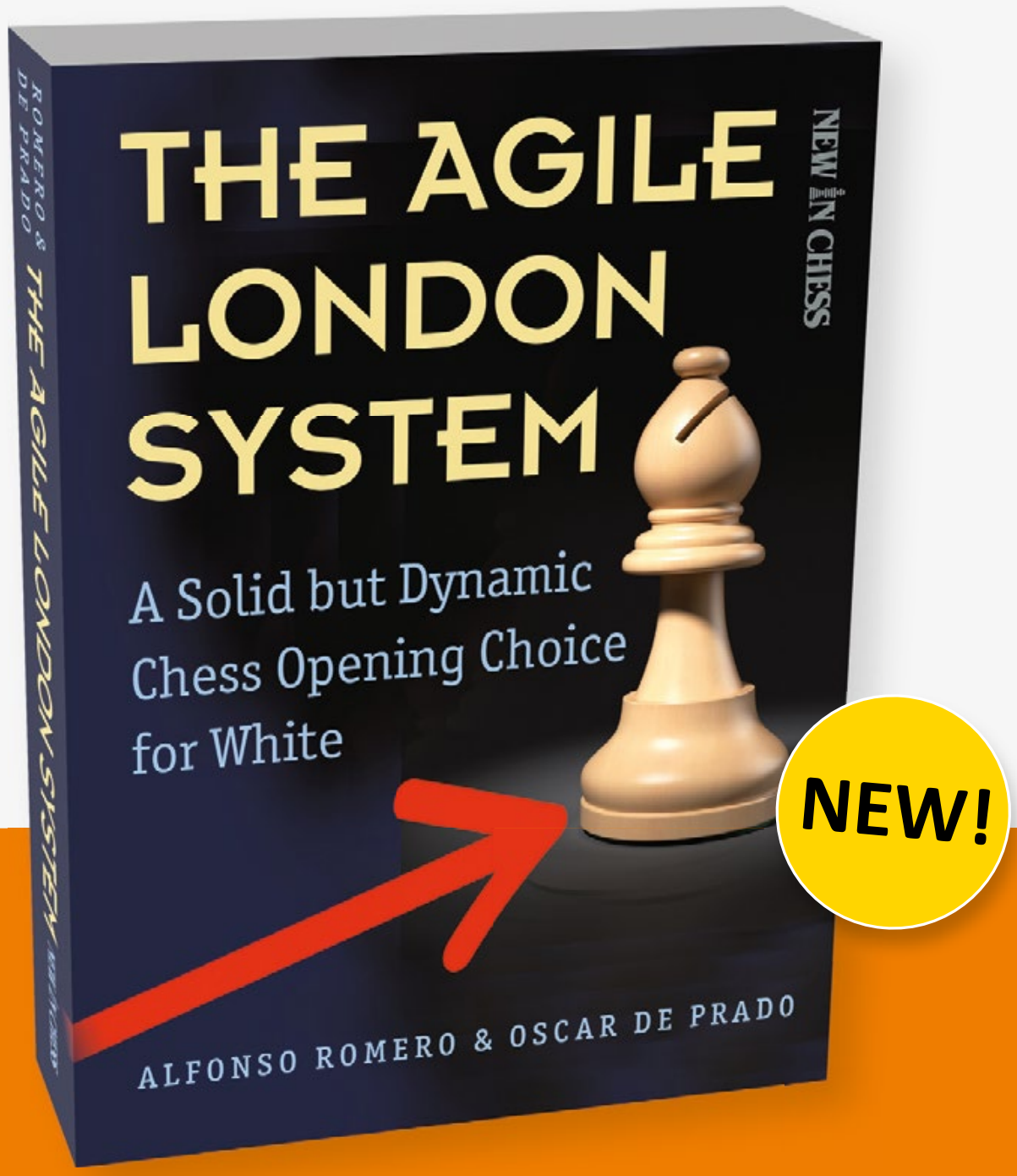
Even Magnus plays it...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CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE
Jimmy Adams, Simen Agdestein, Jeroen Bosch, Magnus Carlsen, Anish Giri, John Henderson, Vladimir Kramnik, Dylan McClain, Parimarjan Negi, Maxim Notkin, Arthur van de Oudeweetering, Macauley Peterson, Judit Polgar, Ruslan Ponomariov, Alejandro Ramirez, Hans Ree, Matthew Sadler, Nigel Short, Jonathan Speelman, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, Wesley So, Jan Timman

PHOTOS AND ILLUSTRATIONS
Maria Emelianova, Dagobert Kohlmeyer, David Llada, Lennart Ootes, Macauley Peterson, Berend Vonk

COVER
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave: Lennart Ootes

'At the Opening Ceremony, each player was asked who, assuming he picked himself to win, would be his second choice. Every player but myself got a vote. It didn't bother me, because I don't expect to come to mind right away as a threat to guys this strong, but it did push me.' – *Wesley So after winning the Sinquefield Cup*

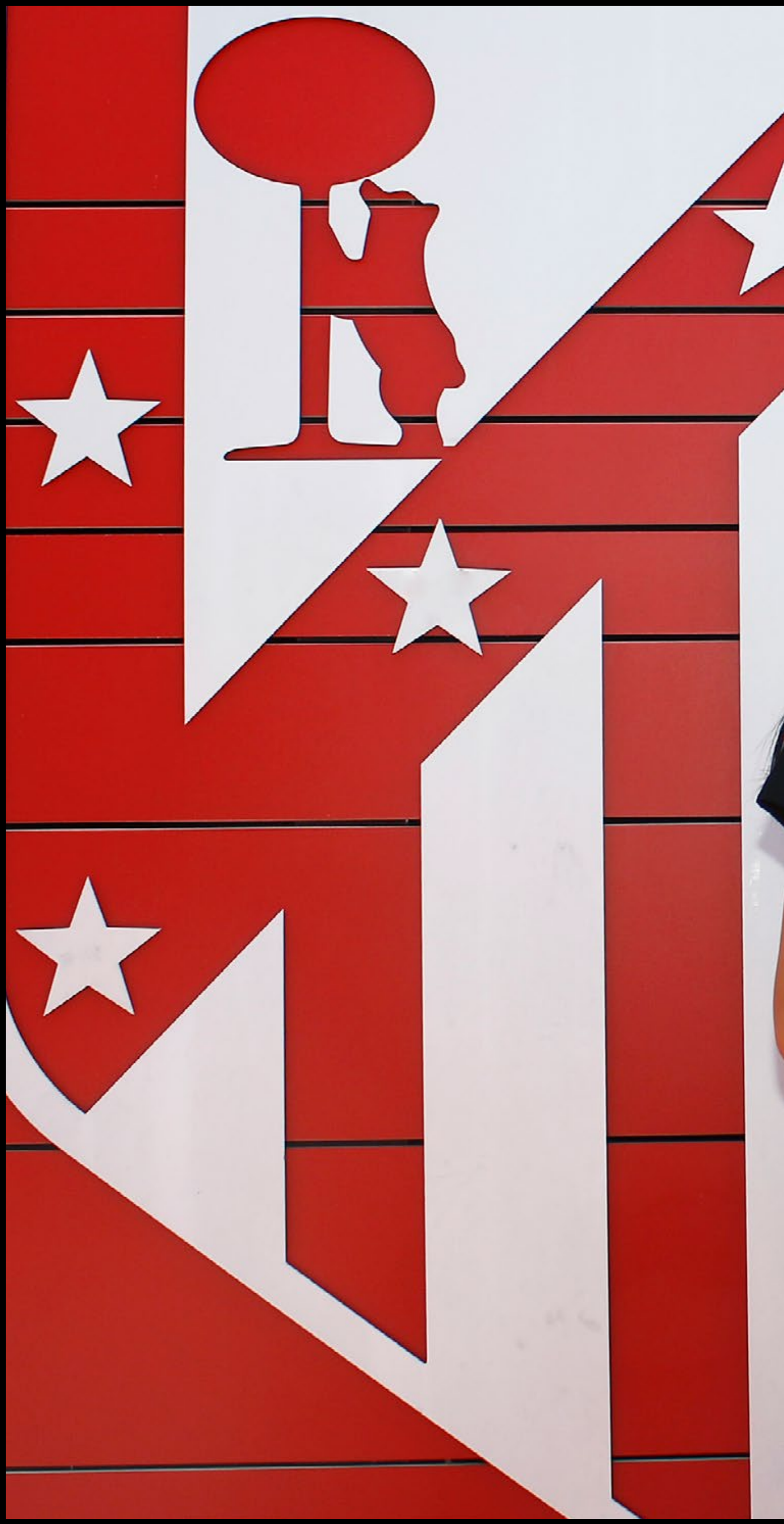
Madrid Rivalries

World Champion Magnus Carlsen and Women's World Champion Hou Yifan have an off-the-board rivalry by supporting opposing Madrid football teams. After Magnus won his world title in 2013, he was accorded a special presentation before a La Liga match at the Bernabéu of a Real Madrid top with his name on it, and then taken into the Spanish club's legendary trophy room. And what Magnus can do, so can Hou – although at Real's city rivals, Atlético Madrid.

While in Spain to compete in the X Tournament in Alcubierre and also the Festival Internacional Valencia Cuna, Hou similarly received the VIP treatment when she dropped in on the team's training session. There, Hou got to meet star striker Fernando Torres, who presented her with an Atlético top with her name on it.

And in an online video report of their meeting by *Marca*, the top Spanish daily sports newspaper, we also discovered that Torres was a very active chess player when he was at school, and still enjoys occasionally playing today – though not at Hou's level, he readily admits! And just like Magnus, Hou was then taken to the Vincente Calderón Stadium for a special tour of their trophy room.

Marca also pointed out another rivalry between the two: Magnus has 125,000 Twitter followers, which pales in comparison to Hou's 3.7 million following on China's rivalling social media platform Weibo. ■



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NIC's Café

New York? New York!

After months of delay, swirling speculations and cynicism from certain quarters, the long-delayed announcement from AGON is now official, with the New York venue for the upcoming Carlsen-Karjakin World Championship match confirmed as the Fulton Market building in Lower Manhattan, restored after Hurricane Sandy. Furthermore, there's now speculation that the Russian fertilizer firm

Magnus Carlsen and Sergey Karjakin will meet at the Fulton Market building in Lower Manhattan.

PhosAgro is set to be announced as the main sponsor.

However, all this positive news doesn't mean the end of AGON's headaches, as now there's concerns with the new 2016-17 Grand Prix cycle, which yet again has a distinct lack of sponsors despite the promise that there would be, and with the novel twist of a 'pay to play' scheme to offset their failure at not being able to find a sponsor for the cycle.

The numbers of players have increased from 16-24 as a direct result of the wildcards increasing from 4 to 9 – and in a further lure to find federations to host and stage the GP, the rating requirement will no longer apply if the wildcard is a national champion. And to save an extra week on hotel fees and running costs, the GP will now change from being a Round-Robin to a 9-round Swiss.

However, the most contentious change is that AGON and FIDE are now looking to profit directly from players who have sponsorship deals. We've all seen many top players wearing jackets and shirts with sponsor logos on them, which previously was not allowed in the GP. Now, to show such logos, players can pony up €100,000 for a two-year sponsorship program – with 15% going to the Federation, 20% directly going to the player, and the rest, we presume, boosting the empty coffers of AGON and FIDE.

Classical Chess

We're reminded of the time when Mark Taimanov, top GM and concert pianist, was asked by a journalist to compare classical music styles with the World Champions, and he proceeded to do so: Lasker-Beethoven, Capablanca-Mozart, Alekhine-Rachmaninov, Botvinnik-Prokofiev, Smyslov-Tchaikovsky, Tal-Paganini, Fischer-Liszt etc.

This was in the mid-1990s, and his comparison concluded with Kasparov and Shostakovich. It was a pity it ended when it did, because next on the list would have been Vladimir Kramnik, not only a classical champion but also a champion of classical music who counts many musicians among his friends, such as the world-famous pianist Nikolai Lugansky and the renowned violinist Vadim Repin.

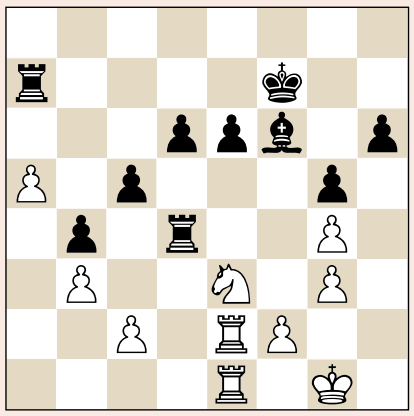
This synergy of chess and music was evident as Kramnik gave a simul at the internationally acclaimed Verbier Festival in Switzerland. Much to his regret some chess enthusiasts didn't have time to play, such as Hungarian conductor Ivan Fischer (a great chess fan and a good friend of Judit Polgar), Russian pianist Daniil Trifonov (whom Kramnik sees as one of the best in the world at the moment) and young Chinese star Yuja Wang (whose Rachmaninov concertos he loves).

But who did play was the legendary cellist Misha Maisky – and he's also a good chess player! After the simul, he told Kramnik that he had not played for 15 years, but that in his active days one of his most frequent opponents was Taimanov's son! When we asked Kramnik about the game, he said that obviously he had not written it down, but that he could reconstruct it for us – and this he did, adding that he was initially outplayed and only won when Maisky got into time-trouble.

On the far left world-famous cellist Misha Maisky. And the game hasn't even begun!

Vladimir Kramnik
Misha Maisky
Verbier simul 2016

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.♗e2 0-0 6.0-0 ♘bd7 7.♖e1 a6 8.♗f1 b5 9.♗g5 c5 10.a4 b4 11.♘d5 ♗b7 12.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 13.d5 h6 14.♗h4 g5 15.♗g3 ♘h5 16.♖b1 ♘xg3 17.hxg3 a5 18.♗c4 ♗a6 19.♗xa6 ♖xa6 20.♘d2 f5 21.exf5 ♖xf5 22.♕e2 ♖a7 23.♕e6+ ♖f7 24.♘c4 ♕d7 25.♕xd7 ♖xd7 26.♘xa5 ♖a7 27.♘c4 ♗d4! No rush to take back the pawn. **28.♖e2 ♖f5 29.b3 ♖xd5 30.g4 ♔f7 31.a5 ♗f6 32.g3 ♖d4! 33.♘e3 e6 34.♖be1**



34...d5 Even stronger was 34...♖e4 and White is in trouble. But also after the text-move Black is clearly better. **35.♘g2 e5** 35...♖a6 was still very good for Black. **36.♘e3 ♖a6 37.♘f5 ♖e4** Losing the thread. After 37...♖xa5 White's advantage would only be small. **38.♖xe4 dxe4 39.♘xh6+ ♔e6 40.♘f5 ♖xa5 41.♖xe4 ♖a8 42.♖e2 ♖a7 43.♖d2** and although he could still have fought on, Black resigned.

The Cad and the Hat

The long-running cartoon comedy *The Simpsons* has given us a family that likes to put all the 'fun' back into dysfunctional. The Simpsons even have their own very popular novelty chess set, but over in Springfield, things are set for an even bigger 64-square twist with the discovery of a chess savant living amongst them – and the storyline will involve World Champion Magnus Carlsen!

But just who could the chess savant be? We know that multi-billionaire Monty Burns has a living chess set in the grounds of his grandiose mansion, with a troupe of full-time actors permanently living in a big box and on call 24/7 should he feel the need to play the odd game now and then. But no, it's not Monty. Could it be Bart Simpson? A good call, as we remember an episode where the *enfant terrible* played three chess opponents at once... and proceeded to lose all three games. But no, not Bart either. So who could it be?

Faced with this dilemma, we decided to put in a call to one of the show's head honchos over at Fox Studios in Los Angeles for an exclusive on the World Champion's upcoming appearance. Executive consultant Antonia Coffman was at the other end of the line, and she told us that all she can say is that Springfield is excited over Magnus' visit, and he'll be appearing in the episode 'The Cad and the Hat' that will air in late February 2017. However, she did reveal that the synopsis for that episode reads: 'When Bart betrays Lisa, he has to deal with his Guilt – literally. Meanwhile, Springfield is in awe when it is revealed that Homer is a chess savant.'

We've heard that Magnus has already recorded his voice for his

The Simpsons chess set. Not only Homer's hat causes suspicions.

cameo in an Oslo studio, and now they are hard at work on his animation. And we're speculating that a big clue to hapless Homer's new-found chess prowess could well be in the title of that episode, where perhaps what turns out to be found under his hat might well be something just a little bit more sophisticated than a can of Duff's beer. D'0-0h!

Drink Like a Grandmaster

Webster University head chess coach Susan Polgar and her husband Paul Truong, the Director of Marketing and PR, like to keep everyone in the loop with lots of lovely press releases and glowing posts on their all-conquering stable of chess-titled students in their SPICE (Susan Polgar Institute for Chess Excellence) programme in St. Louis, as they crush all opposition before them in the US collegiate chess scene.

But bad news? Well, they conveniently like to ignore that – and especially when it appears in the court reports inside the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* newspaper, about a bizarre story involving GM André Diamant, a two-time national collegiate chess champion who was a leading member of the top-ranked Webster U chess team.

Diamant, from Brazil, was accused last year of paying his 6-year-old son to drink shots of alcohol, and was originally charged with misdemeanour child endangerment. Initially it was reported that he'd skipped the country, but he returned to face the music. And in early August, when the case finally came to court, he pleaded guilty to the lesser charge of third-degree misdemeanour assault, and was fined $300 – but not before he had also completed a parenting class and performed 40 hours of community service 'as a show of good faith'.

The incident came to the attention of officials when it was mentioned by his now ex-wife Mara Kamphorst – also on the SPICE programme at Webster U – when she was seeking a protection order against her husband. And when the son talked about what happened, he told the police that his father gave him two $20 bills to drink 'bad tea' and 'good tea' from a shot glass. The

Brazilian GM André Diamant will regret 'bad tea' forever.

'bad tea' made the infant vomit – and no wonder, as it turned out to be sake, strong Japanese rice wine.

When the police interviewed Diamant, he explained to them that he'd been celebrating a chess tournament victory and that he wanted his son to drink with him because 'alcohol played a part' in his religious and cultural traditions. ■

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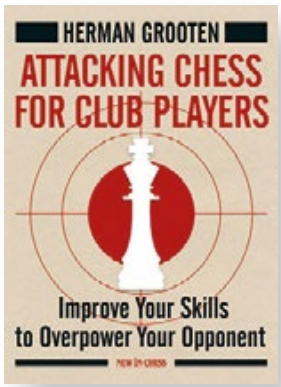

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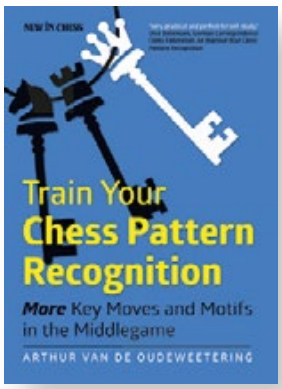

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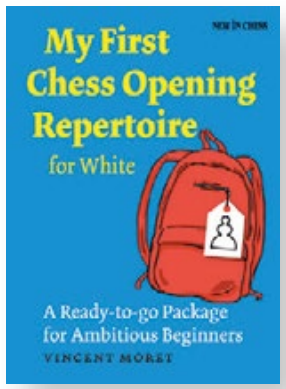

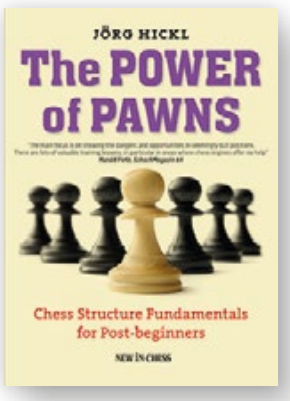

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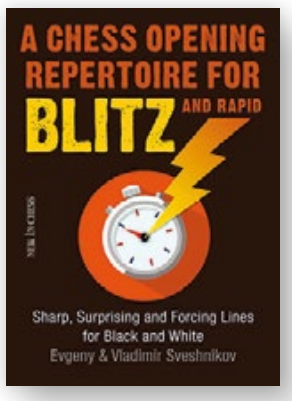
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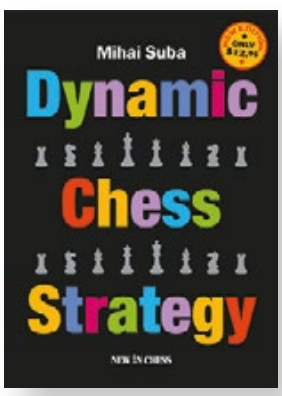

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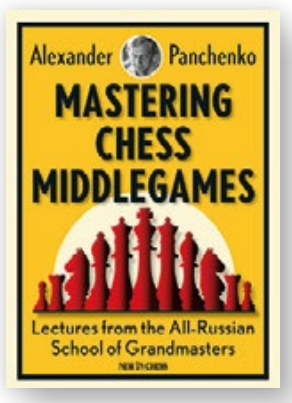

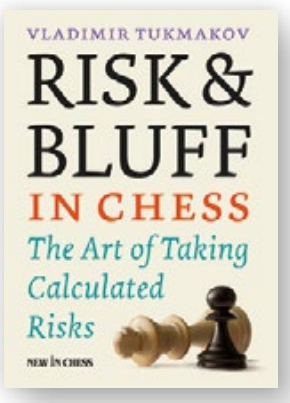

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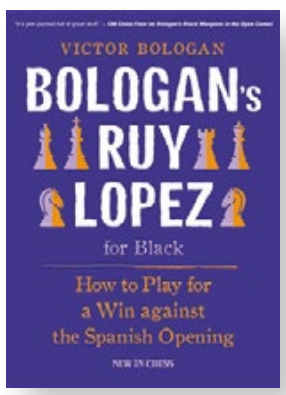

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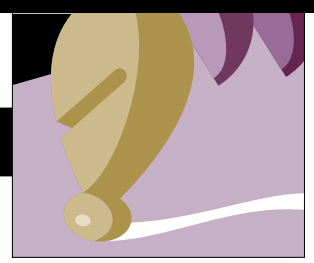

Not wishing to understand

Genna Sosonko's books and articles are wonderful. He has a high social I.Q. – a high emotional intelligence – which makes him an excellent biographer. In his recent remembrance of Kortchnoi in New In Chess 2016/5, Sosonko writes (emphasis mine), 'Once I said to him that I intended to quit playing chess. *He didn't even understand what I was talking about:* "I know that feeling. I sometimes refuse to take part in a tournament myself if I want to conserve my strength ..."'

I had a different thought. The conversation that Sosonko was initiating must have seemed disagreeable to Kortchnoi, for two reasons. First, Sosonko was probably going to say why he wanted to stop playing chess – thus arguing that chess has limited value. But Kortchnoi didn't want to believe such a thing. Second, Sosonko was probably going to talk about some things other than chess: those things that he might do after quitting. But Kortchnoi only wanted to talk about chess.

So maybe it wasn't that Viktor didn't understand; maybe it was that Viktor didn't want to understand.

Stuart Rachels
Tuscaloosa, Alabama, USA

Offensive remarks

I was disappointed to see that in the latest issue (2016/5) of your prestigious magazine 22 pages were dedicated to rapid and blitz tournaments. Is rapid chess or blitz (maybe bullet someday in the near future?) so important to be published in 1/3 of the best chess magazine in the world? On the other hand, the article on the late Viktor Kortchnoi was very good. At the Linares Open in 1988 (I played in the tournament) I witnessed an outburst of his anger and offensive remarks to a Mexican opponent, just because he, Kortchnoi, had left his queen 'en prise' (x-ray) in a won position. The local newspaper published the story the next day... And what about other tournaments that do not have as participants the so-called super-GMs? Why are there almost never games from them? After all the chess world is not about the same 10 or 12 players all the time.

David Borensztajn
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Write to us
New In Chess, P.O. Box 1093
1810 KB Alkmaar, The Netherlands
or e-mail: editors@newinchess.com
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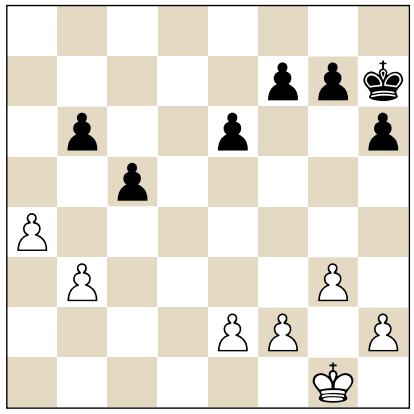
A flaw

In New In Chess 2016/4 there is a flaw in Jan Timman's analysis of the game Van Kampen-Wojtaszek. In the comment after Black's 21st move



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM
position after 25...c5

after 26.♔f1? (instead of 26.♔g2) 26...♔g6 27.e4 Black must play 27...♔g5! 28.f3 f5=, since after the given 27...f5? White wins by playing 28.e5! f4 (28...♔g5 29.♔e2 ♔g4 30.♔d3 ♔f3 31.♔c4 ♔xf2 32.♔b5 g5 33.♔xb6 f4 34.gxf4 gxf4 35.a5 f3 36.a6 ♔e3 37.a7 f2 39.a8♕ f1♕ 40.♕c8+–) 29.gxf4 ♔f5 30.♔e2 ♔e4 (30...♔xf4 31.♔d3 ♔xe5 32.♔c4 ♔d6 33.♔b5 ♔c7 34.a5 bxa5 35.♔xc5+–) 31.♔d2 ♔d4 32.b4! cxb4 33.♔c2 g6 34.♔b3 ♔c5 35.h3+–.

Kari Tikkanen
Iisalmi, Finland

Karpov-Kortchnoi corrected

Allow me to present a little correction to Jan Timman's statistics in New In Chess 2016/5. In a seven-year period, Anatoly Karpov and Viktor Kortchnoi played a total of 74 (and not 104) games for the world title:

- In Moscow 1974 (the Candidates Final that was upgraded when Fischer declined to defend his title) they played 24, with Karpov winning 3-2 (and 19 draws).
- In Baguio 1978, 32 games were played, 6-5 for Karpov (and 21 draws), resulting in a subtotal of 56 (and not 55) games with Karpov on a +2 score, leading 9-7 (40 draws).
- Then, in Merano 1981 we saw a clear victory for Karpov, 6-2 and 10 draws, in 18 games. That makes a total of 74 games, with +15 -9 =50 for Karpov.

Best wishes to your (my!) wonderful magazine! I can't really stress how much I appreciate New In Chess.

Paulo Fernandes
Vale Salgueiro, Portugal

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PUBLISHER: Allard Hoogland
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:
Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam
HONORARY EDITOR:
Jan Timman
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR: Anish Giri
EDITORS: Peter Boel, René Olthof
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PHONE: 00-31-(0)72-51 27 137
FAX: 00-31-(0)72-51 58 234
E-MAIL:
SUBSCRIPTIONS: nic@newinchess.com
EDITORS: editors@newinchess.com
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INFOGRAPHIC

Staying Sharp, and Avoiding Fatigue, Before a Match

How much chess is too much? How much is too little? Trying to answer those questions is part of the preparation for an important match, like the one for the World Championship between Magnus Carlsen and Sergey Karjakin that will be held this November. In addition to all the studying and training each player has been doing to prepare for the other, they have also been managing their schedules. They both played in the Bilbao Masters Final in July and they are also competing in the Chess Olympiad in September, but that is all they will do before the match.

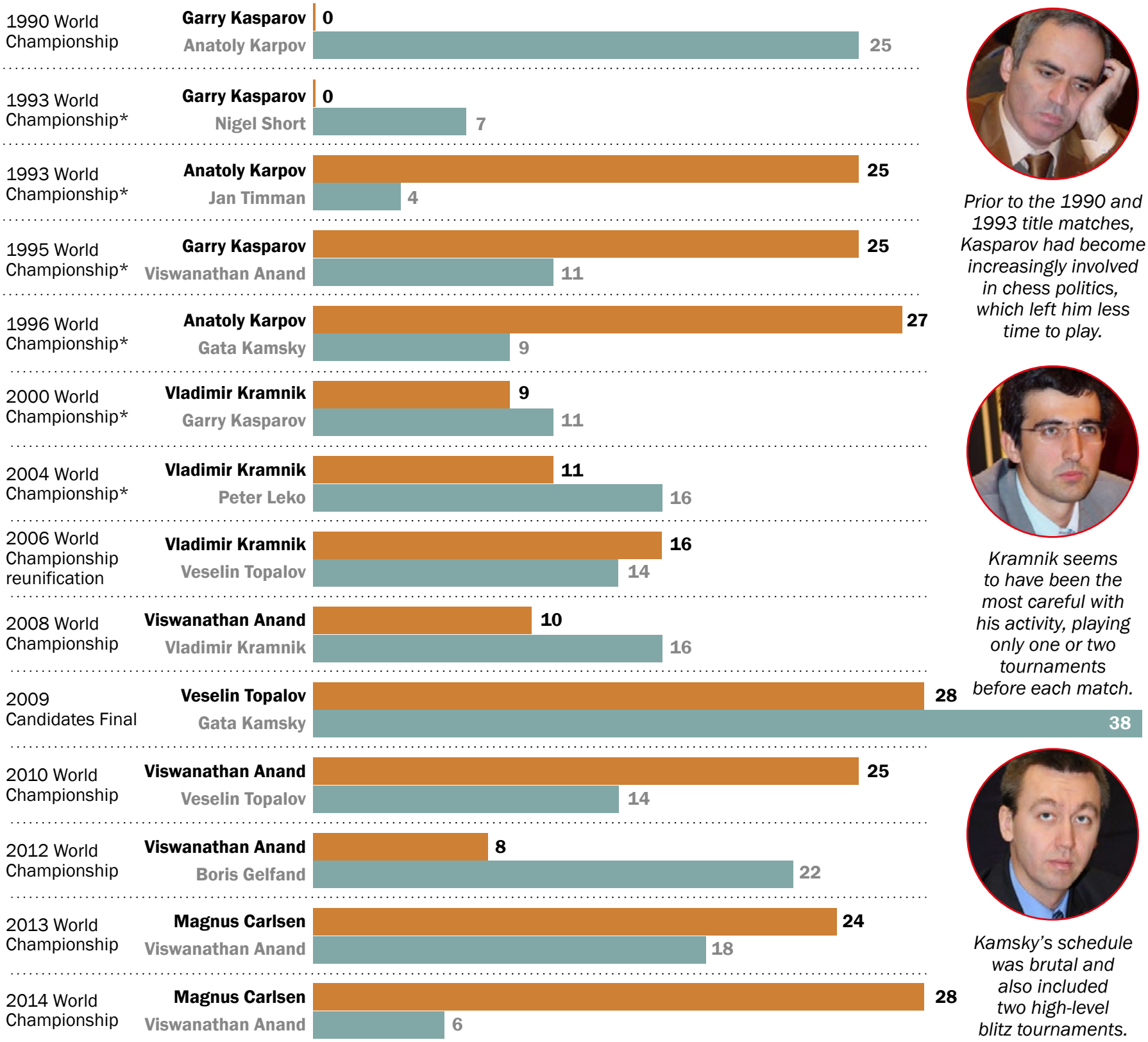
Each player is trying to show up in November in peak competitive form -- neither too exhausted from having played too much in prior months, nor too rusty because they have played too little.

While most competitors would agree that the approach of Mikhail Botvinnik, the sixth World Champion, was too extreme -- he often did not play during the three-year gap between his title defences -- it is also fairly clear that playing in gruelling tournaments just before a match is not a good idea either. The following graphic looks at the tournament activity of players in the six months prior to major matches over the last 25 years. There does not seem to be a magic number of games that is a key to success or that everyone agrees is the best. Instead, to some degree, it seems to be a matter of individual preference.

DYLAN LOEB McCLAIN

Number of games played in the six months before each match **Winner** Loser

Only standard, or classical, time controls are included as regular tournaments at rapid and blitz speeds have only become popular relatively recently.



Prior to the 1990 and 1993 title matches, Kasparov had become increasingly involved in chess politics, which left him less time to play.

Kramnik seems to have been the most careful with his activity, playing only one or two tournaments before each match.

Kamsky's schedule was brutal and also included two high-level blitz tournaments.

The knock-out World Championship tournaments from 1998 to 2004 have not been included, even though they ended in mini-matches. The reason is that the players had no choice but to play many games in order to reach the finals. *There were two rivalling world title cycles at the time.

Fair & Square

James Brokenshire MP: 'We will never treat EU citizens as pawns in some kind of cynical game of negotiation chess.'
(The UK Home Office immigration minister, in the aftermath of the Brexit vote)

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar: 'Trump is that chess player who likes to make every move with an aggressive slam on the board while shouting, "Bam!"'
(The former NBA superstar – and avid chess fan – in an op-ed for The Washington Post on the controversial presidential candidate, Donald J. Trump)

David J. Morgan: 'Slamming down the pieces is as unnecessary as slamming a swing door.'
(In his Quotes & Queries column, BCM, October 1956)

George Packer: 'The whisperer is somebody who might be compared to a chess player. And I have the impression that she [Angela Merkel] thinks things over more carefully and is always a few moves ahead of her competitor.'
(Writing in 2014 in The New Yorker magazine about the rise of Angela Merkel)

Lewis Carroll: 'It's a great huge game of chess that's being played – all over the world – if this is the world at all, you know. Oh, what fun it is! How I wish I was one of them! I wouldn't mind being a Pawn, if only I might join – though of course I should like to be a Queen, best.'
(In his chessic follow-up adventure to Alice in Wonderland, Through The Looking-Glass)

Tim Burgess: 'It's kind of like chess moves.'
(The Charlatans' voice in Mojo magazine, as he joins forces on a mission into avant-pop with his LP collaboration with jazz saxophonist Peter Gordon)

Magnus Carlsen: 'I am not a genius.'
(The World Champion's suggested opening line of his autobiography, during an interview with actor Rainn Wilson on the YouTube channel SoulPancake)

Sarah Hurst: 'Chess doesn't require collaboration or take into account human relationships. Most of life is not like chess at all.'
(Interviewed in Kingpin magazine)

Louis Gerstner: 'I just think we should look at this as a chess match between the world's greatest chess player and Garry Kasparov.'
(The IBM Chairman on the 1997 Deeper Blue-Kasparov match)

Bart Simpson: 'Who plays chess over the mail when you can play it on the Internet; or better yet, not play chess at all?'

Alfred Binet: 'Could we look into the world of a chess player, we should see there a whole world of feelings, images, ideas, emotion and passion.'
(The influential French psychologist (1857-1911) and inventor of the first usable intelligence test, the Binet-Simon scale)

William Shakespeare: 'I pray you sir, is it your will, To make a stale of me amongst these mates?'
(Alluded to be a pun on chess, from the great playwright in this, the 400th anniversary of his death, said by Katharine in The Taming of the Shrew)

Peter Dobereiner: 'Golf is the loneliest game, not excluding postal chess.'
(The late great top golf writer)

Vishy Anand: 'Honestly, I understand why they are asking that question. It doesn't offend me. I just live for the moment. One day it will be "yes". For the moment it is "no".'
(Asked by The Hindu if he was affected when people repeatedly ask if he has retirement plans)

Irving Chernev: 'Of chess it has been said that life is not long enough for it, but that is the fault of life, not chess.'

Stephen Leacock: 'Chess is one long regret.'
(The English-born Canadian teacher, political scientist, writer, and humorist, 1869-1944)

The significance of his victory could hardly be overstated. One year after he finished dead last in the Sinquefield Cup in St. Louis, a solid and pragmatic Wesley So returned to win his first super-tournament, claim the $75,000 first prize and move into clear first place in the overall Grand Chess Tour standings. Our man on the spot was **ALEJANDRO RAMIREZ**, a St. Louis veteran who doesn't shrink back from taking a critical look at one of the finest chess events in the world.

A most wanted win

Wesley So tops fourth Sinquefield Cup

I've had the privilege of having a fabulous vantage point for the Sinquefield Cup since its inception in 2013. The first year I was there as a journalist for ChessBase, writing excitedly when Magnus Carlsen turned down Levon Aronian's draw, a half point that would have sealed the tournament, to successfully play on with a slight advantage and win the tournament by a full point. Since that first year, I've been hired as a commentator for the Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis' live audience, a different team than the known Maurice, Jenn and Yasser combo, which does it for the Internet audience. I had the thrill of interviewing Fabiano Caruana in 2014 as he dominated the field with his 7-0 start – actually, he came to talk to the live audience every day until the seventh round. When he failed to show up, his streak ended!

Last year's event was certainly not as spectacular, but it was great. The inaugural Grand Chess Tour was under way, and the Sinquefield Cup proved a tense and fighting tournament which was won thanks to Levon Aronian's annihilation of the American players.

With the experience that the Saint Louis Chess Club has garnered, and the amount of resources and enthusiasm that its staff, led by Joy Bray and Tony Rich, enjoy, it is no wonder that the Sinquefield Cup is guaranteed to be a good tournament. You have some of the best players in the world, in the capital of chess in America, being treated to their every need so they can focus and give us the best chess possible. The venue is wonderful, the audience is vibrant, and the Central West End in St. Louis could not be a more perfect area to host a world-class round-robin.

This year's tournament was no exception: it was a good event, but, somehow, it just didn't have the magic of the previous editions. The draw rate of the tournament was rather high at 71.1%. Last year's edition sat at 57.8%, while the heavily criticized London Classic of last year was just

Visiting the TV studio after his victory in the Sinquefield Cup, Wesley So made no secret of how happy he was to win his first super-tournament.

above 77%. 'What happened?' would be the normal question, and I think it can be attributed to many things.

From the get-go the tournament had a few hiccups, most of them outside of the organizers' power. For starters, the Olympiad was moved relatively last-minute, and it suddenly clashed with the already announced dates of the Sinquefield Cup, which forced St. Louis to move its dates to what many would argue was a bit of an inconvenient time. It was close to too many tournaments halfway across the World (Bilbao, Dortmund, Biel, the Olympiad itself). Then, of course, because of the World Championship match the star of every chess tournament was missing, and saying that you have a tournament with the top 10 players in the world and saying that you have a tournament with the top 2-11 are two very different things. Last, but not least, Vladimir Kramnik's renewed health problems forced the organizers to issue an invite to Peter Svidler as a replacement, and he spent more time scrambling to get a visa than he did preparing for the tournament. MVL came in as the hottest player in the world, skyrocketing to number two in the rankings, but was unable to find his pace in St. Louis.

Still, all that having been said, the tournament was entertaining. It started off rather well, with two victories, as Topalov beat Svidler (or rather Svidler beat himself) and So outplayed Nakamura from the opening. Even two of the draws were nothing to complain about: Caruana got into massive time-trouble against Anand, but found a perpetual near the time-control, while Giri played a great game against MVL, only to let him off with an inaccuracy. True, Levon easily defused Ding Liren's white pieces, but this is kind of what we had hoped for: several fighting games a day. Commenting was a breeze; the games ended by the first time-control and we never ran out of things to talk about.

Wesley So's win against Nakamura would have a big impact on the final standings, and here it is with notes by the winner.

NOTES BY
Wesley So

CA 5.4 – E05
Wesley So
Hikaru Nakamura
St. Louis 2016 (1)

Being part of the 2016 Sinquefield Cup, playing for high stakes against the best chess players in the world, is the dream of any serious chess player – unless, of course, if you have experienced the nightmare of having finished dead last in the same event, 12 months earlier. In that case it's still a dream but one that wakes you up with your heart banging. How would

'How would I do this year? I prepared but... it's not as if I didn't prepare last year...'

I do this year? I prepared but... it's not as if I didn't prepare last year... Plus, for my first game I drew an aggressive, very tough and experienced player who is an expert in strong theoretical battles. My first jump was into the deep end of the pool with GM Hikaru Nakamura.

1.d4 I chose this, thinking of some new angles in the Catalan.

1...♘f6 2.c4 e6

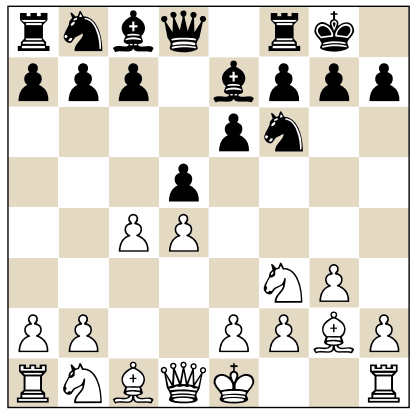
Hikaru did not go for the King's Indian, although later, in Round 5, he used it against Svidler.

3.♘f3 d5 4.g3 ♗e7

Lately it seems that Hikaru has been going for this ...e6-d5, ...♘f6-♗e7 sequence against any White opening except 1.e4. It's a very solid set-up, and it makes his preparation easier. White has not really found anything special against it.

4...♗b4+ 5.♗d2 ♗e7 is another solid line, which Anish Giri played against me in Round 4. He got a great position after surprising me with a Stonewall set-up. But that game is not our focus for today.

5.♗g2 0-0

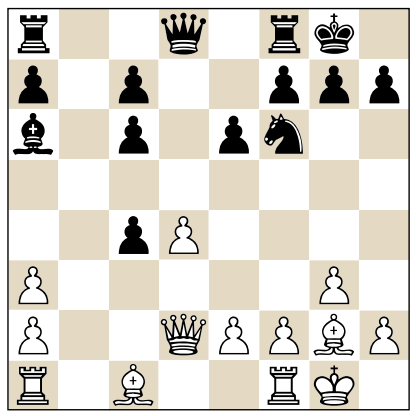


6.0-0

6.♕c2 was tried recently in the Bilbao tournament, but it's unclear if it's enough for anything really worthwhile.

6...dxc4 7.♘e5 ♘c6 8.♘xc6

bxc6 9.♘a3 ♗xa3 10.bxa3 ♗a6 11.♕d2



I was aiming for this variation that day. Besides other strong players, Vladimir Kramnik is one of the main pioneers of this 9.♘a3 move. It's a very strange line, in which doubled and tripled pawns ensure a very unclear game. White is a pawn down, by the way, but in return for that I get

the bishop pair and a very nice spot for my queen on a5.

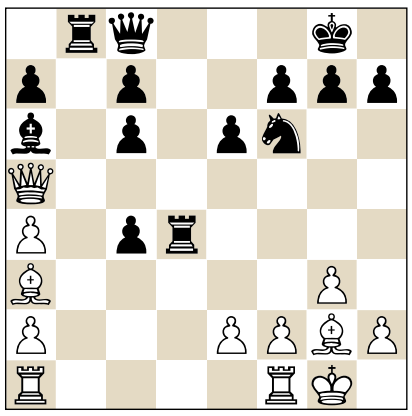
11...♖b8

Black has some alternatives on each move, so you can either check the theory with the computer or try to understand the position yourselves. I suggest doing the latter first.

For example, why is 11...c3 12.♕xc3 ♗xe2 13.♖e1 ♗b5 not to be recommended?

12.♕a5 ♕c8 13.a4 ♖d8 14.♗a3 ♖xd4

Up to here we both blitzed out our moves; then I played:



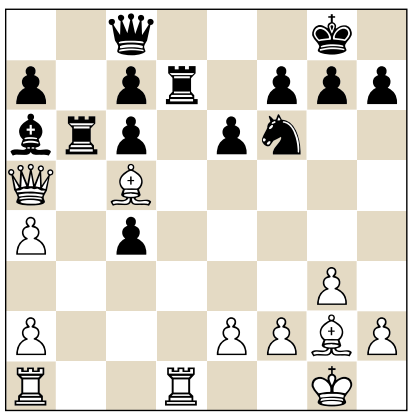
15.♖fb1! This had been brought to my attention by a friend, and I think it's probably the best move.

15...♖b6 The idea is that after 15...♖xb1+ 16.♖xb1 I threaten to take material because of his back rank weaknesses. And if he decides to make a normal move like 16...♖d8?! (16...♘d7 would be better: 17.♗xc6 h6 18.♕c3 e5, with a completely fine game) 17.♗e7 ♖e8 18.♗c5 White gets a better position, as the a7-pawn will fall.

16.♗c5 ♖d7

16...♖d8 is also met by 17.♖d1.

17.♖d1



LENNART OOTES

The Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis at night. The club is the heart of America's chess mecca in the city's affluent Central West End.

17...h6?

Hikaru later claimed that his loss stemmed from this move, saying he should have played 17...♖d5. He is probably right, although he may have had chances to save the game even later on. In a concrete variation like this, in which White is two pawns down and Black has a bishop cut off on a6, what matters most is tempo, and semi-waiting moves are too risky. 17...♖xd1+! 18.♖xd1 ♖b8 is my preference instead of 17...♖d5. I don't see why Black needs to sacrifice the exchange.

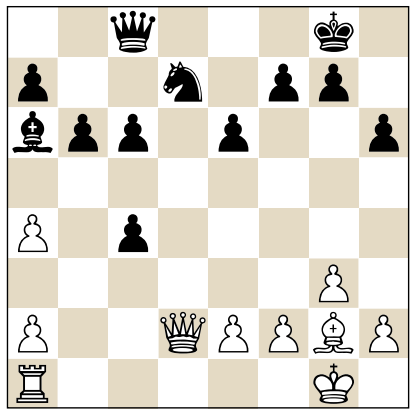
Admittedly, 17...♘d5 looks fine, too. Perhaps Hikaru's preparation consisted of something like 18.e4 ♘f6 19.♗xb6 cxb6 20.♕e5 ♖d3 21.♗f1 ♘d7 22.♕b2 c5!, when Black's pawns are rolling and he is not afraid to sacrifice another exchange to keep the d-file closed.

18.♖xd7 ♘xd7 19.♗xb6 cxb6

19...axb6 20.♕d2 c5 21.a5 won't change anything.

20.♕d2

My responses were not too difficult to find. Just take the rook on b6 and seize control of the d-file.



20...c5

20...♘c5 21.♖d1 ♘xa4 22.♕d8+ ♕xd8 23.♖xd8+ ♔h7 24.♔f1 looks very similar to the game. White's king will prevent enemy pawns from queening, while the rook and the bishop will round up the enemy. Basically, White is playing a piece up, because the king on h7 is so far away from the battlefield.

21.♖d1 ♘f6 22.♔f1

Here, I was a little confused by the position, so I decided to play a non-committal move while I thought it out.

22.♕d8+ ♕xd8 23.♖xd8+ ♔h7 24.♔f1 would later transpose to the game.

22...♔h7

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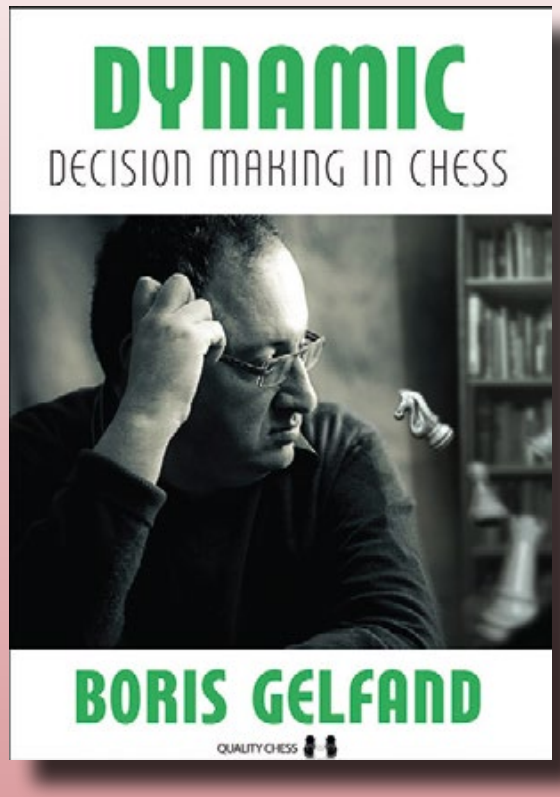

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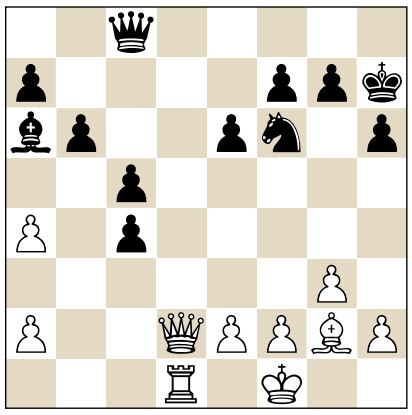


23.♕c2+?

And a mistake comes. That is the problem: when you hesitate too much (I speak from experience), you tend to not make the correct decisions.

The correct move was 23.♕d8!.

23...♔g8

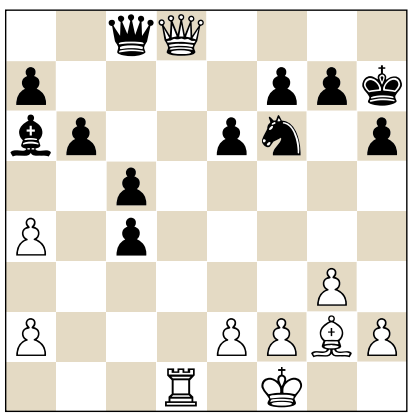
Fortunately, Hikaru believed me and avoided weakening the a1-h8 diagonal.

Much better was 23...g6!, which would put Black out of danger. The point is that he can avoid the queen swap. After 24.♕c3 ♔g7, 25.h4 (25.g4 ♕c7) was my idea, but simply 25...♕c7, and with g4 always met by ...♕f4, Black is equalizing.

24.♕d2

Also good is 24.a5, as after 24...b5 25.♖d6 White is threatening to win material by ♖c6, and Black cannot play ...♗b7 now because of back rank problems.

24...♔h7 25.♕d8!



Now I am back on track.

25...♕xd8

25...c3 26.♕xc8 ♗xc8 27.♖c1 does not help Black. 27...♘d5 can even be met by more exchanges, after which Black will not have enough resources to fight back.

26.♖xd8 c3 27.♔e1

My king comes to handle the c-pawn just in time.

27...♗c4

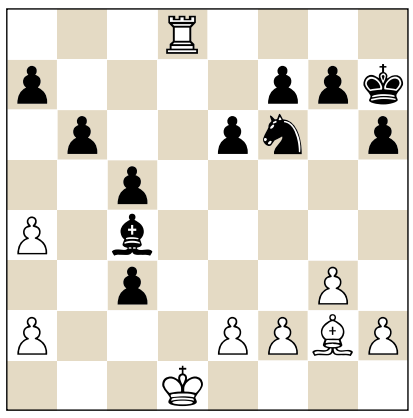
He decides to eliminate the a2-pawn, with the hope of maybe drawing with all pawns on the same side.

27...c2 won't help: 28.♔d2 ♗xe2 29.♔xc2 ♗c4 30.a3, and White is winning.

28.♔d1!

Focusing on the plan, which is to eliminate Black's passed pawn.

28.♖a8 a6 is not as clear. White does not need to commit his rook yet. Better to wait for a more opportune moment to see what is the best way to go.

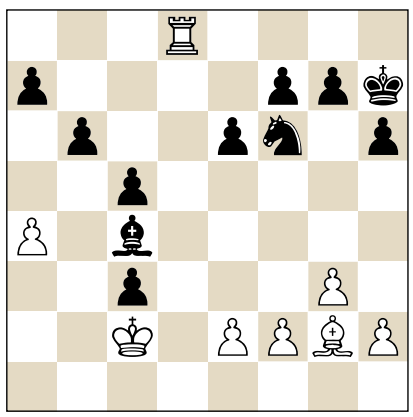


28...♗xa2

Or 28...♘g4 29.♖d7 ♘xf2+ 30.♔c2 ♗xe2 31.♖xf7, winning.

29.♔c2 ♗c4

After 29...♗d5 White goes 30.♗xd5 exd5, and now the simplest is 31.♔xc3 ♘e4+ 32.♔c2, when White's a-pawn will decide the game.

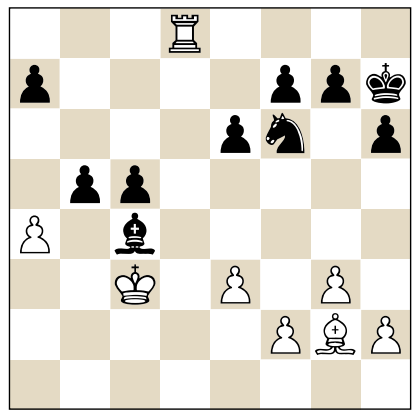


30.e3

30.e4! was much stronger, according to the computer. I was worried about 30...b5 31.♔xc3 ♘g4, when my bishop on g2 is temporarily cut off from the fight. But apparently White has 32.♖a8, and Black will be unable to deal with my passed a-pawn.

30...b5 31.♔xc3

Black's pawns start falling one by one. He cannot hold on to any of his queenside pawns.



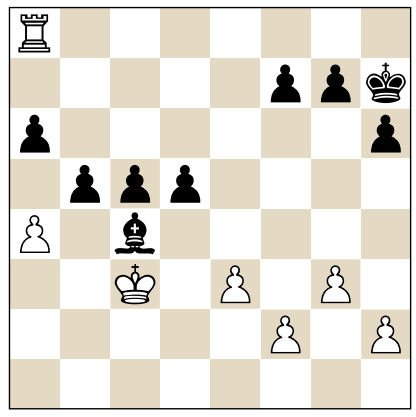
31...a6

In case of 31...♘g4, 32.h3! ♘xf2 33.♖d2 is a nice trick.

And in case of 31...♗d5 32.♗xd5 ♘xd5+ 33.♔d2 bxa4 Black will temporarily have three pawns for the exchange, but after 34.♖a8 he will eventually lose all his queenside pawns.

32.♖a8 ♘d5+ 33.♗xd5 exd5

33...♗xd5 34.♖xa6 bxa4 35.♖xa4 f5 might be what Hikaru was hoping for and some kind of a fortress, but it won't hold: 36.♖a5 c4 37.♔d4 ♔g6, and now the fastest is 38.g4! (38.♔e5 is the simple way) 38...fxg4 39.e4 ♗b7 40.♔e5, when Black has no counterplay, and I simply want to lead my e-pawn all the way to promotion.



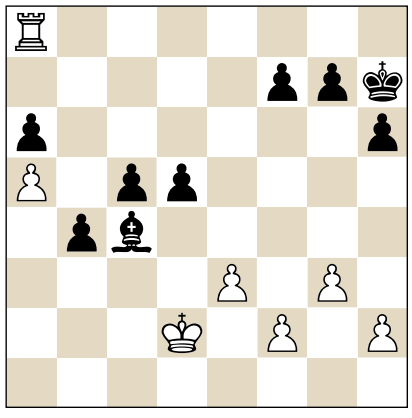
34.a5!

My a-pawn seals the victory.

Of course, there was no need to go for

34.axb5? axb5 35.♖c8 d4+ 36.exd4 cxd4+ 37.♔xd4 ♔g6 38.♔e5, but I think this should win for White as well. My idea would be to attack his pawns on g7 and f7, while at the same time pushing my kingside pawns when necessary. It would be interesting to check whether this endgame is a win or a draw.

34...b4+ 35.♔d2



35...♗f1

35...♗b5 36.♖c8 c4 37.♖b8 c3+ 38.♔c1 b3 39.♖xb5 axb5 40.a6! b2+ 41.♔b1 is a good example of why you need an active king in the endgame! Black's queenside pawn mass cannot do anything by itself.

36.♖c8 c4 37.♖b8 b3 38.♔c3

Here Hikaru resigned without waiting to reach move 40. He will lose his a6-pawn and knows resisting is useless.

This win went a long way for me emotionally as well as standings-wise. Maybe there is a moral here about courage, toughening up, or something like that.

At the Opening Ceremony, each player was asked who, assuming he picked himself to win, would be his second choice. Every player but myself got a vote. It didn't bother me, because I don't expect to come to mind right away as a threat to guys this strong, but it did push me. I saw I needed to fight hard and I tried my best in every round. At the end of the day, +2 was sufficient for clear first place.

■ ■ ■

The ambiance around the chess club is always jovial. Fans gather around the playing hall to see the start of the game, and later they disperse to watch the game in one of three locations: downstairs, where they can tune in to the Internet commentary via a giant TV-set; next-door in the Kingside Diner (part of the chess campus), where two grandmasters analysed the games; and if you felt these grandmasters were not the ones you wanted to listen to, you could simply walk across the street to the fabulous World Chess Hall of Fame to hear the dissenting opinion of the other commentary team. For the most part, Eric Hansen and Ben Finegold were in one place, while I was doing it with Robert Hess in the other. Our crowds would disperse when they sensed a game ending, so as to try to catch the players leaving the club and grab an autograph or a picture. When the first day was over, I walked into the chess club, and it seemed as if everything was going to be just great.

'Everybody feared the man with three names (believe it or not, the last night in St. Louis we found out he has actually got even more than three names).'

The second day brought even more excitement! MVL and Anand played a crazy game, which ended thanks to a blunder by the Frenchman, while Giri unsuccessfully sacrificed all his pieces against Nakamura to avoid being ground down. Svidler and Aronian were playing a fabulous game that seemed like it was going to dissolve into a draw, but Svidler beat himself for the second time in a row by botching it up. What a start! What a joy to be at the Sinquefield Cup again! And then, I don't know, something happened.

But before we look at that, here's that crazy game between MVL and Vishy Anand.

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

CK 1.6 – B11
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave
Vishy Anand
St. Louis 2016 (2)

Everybody feared the man with three names (believe it or not, the last night in St. Louis we found out he has actually got even more than three names. If you don't believe it, see his passport with the freaky Harry Potter mug shot). He came to the tournament after a series of spectacular results, climbing all the way up to 2nd place in the rankings. In the first round, yours truly let him off in a dubious position and it seemed that the wind was still blowing in the same direction. The next day Vishy begged to differ.

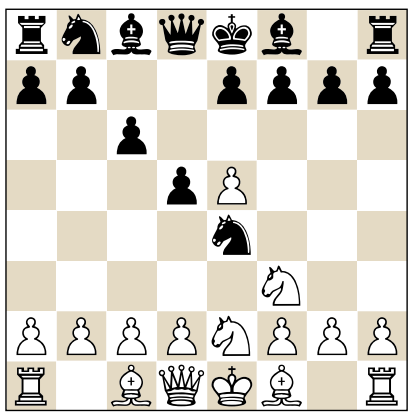
1.e4 c6!? A peculiar opening choice coming from Anand. Even when for one reason or another Vishy wants to deviate from his new favourite, the Berlin Defence, the Tiger often jumps into the woods of the Najdorf.

2.♘f3 d5 3.♘c3

A fashionable variation, in the footsteps of Bobby Fischer.

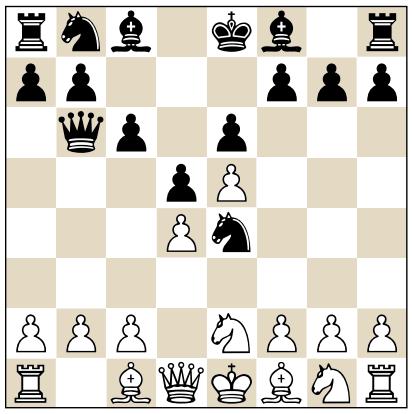
3...♘f6 A relatively fresh line, but by now it has also become kind of theory. Still, rather unexplored for modern standards.

4.e5 ♘e4 5.♘e2



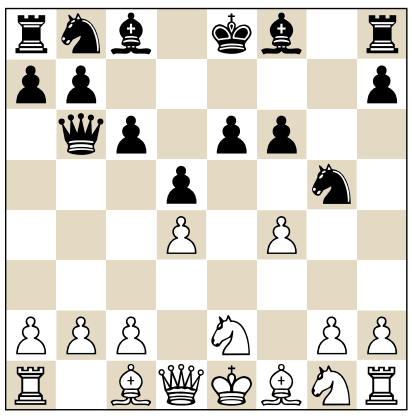
Logical. The knight on e4 finds itself in a shaky place now and d3 has to be prevented.

5...♕b6! 6.d4 e6 7.♘fg1



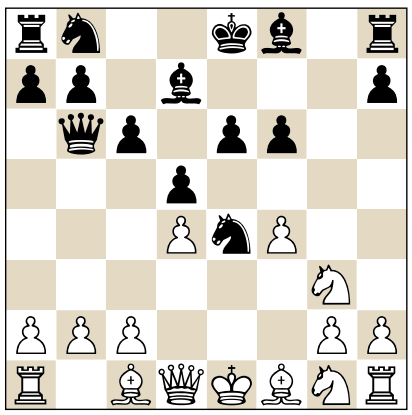
Once again, everything turns around the e4-knight. Now f3 is a threat.

7...f6! 8.f3 ♘g5 9.exf6 gxf6 10.f4



10...♘e4 10...♘f7 was played by MVL in 2013 against Dominguez. For a while the French genius thought he could play chess as Black in an opening other than the Najdorf, but he quickly realized that that was not the case. His Caro-Kann creations, although he didn't lose many, were pretty bleak.

11.♘g3 ♗d7!?

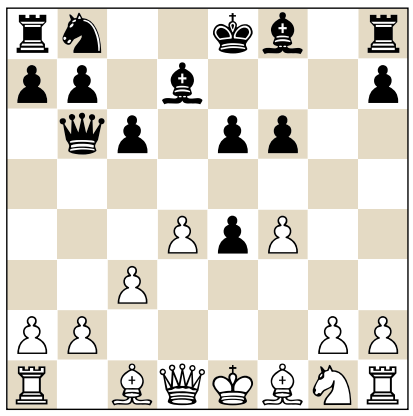


A rare move, for obvious reasons. The position has been seen before, actually, so this may very well be a product of home analysis.

12.♘xe4 dxe4 13.c3!?

A rather unexpected, yet pretty move. With no pieces developed at all, MVL prepares a harmonious set-up with ♗c4 and ♘e2.

13.♕h5+ looks nice, but after 13...♔d8 14.c3 c5!? Black actually grabs the initiative.



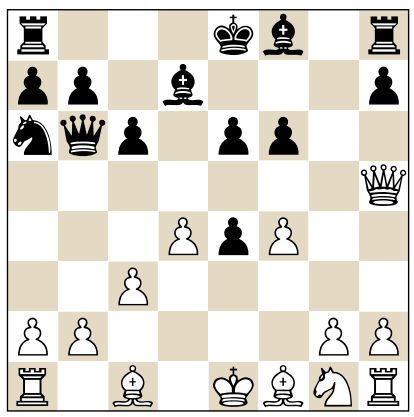
13...♘a6?! Playing in the same funky style as 11...♗d7!?. Although this move seems to be good in some variations, here I am sure it was not the best.

13...c5 is the alternative, when the knight will join the game in more conventional fashion. Note that 11...♗d7!? places the bishop on the square on which it is bound to be developed, whereas 13...♘a6?! is much more committal, considering the potential future of this knight on c6.

LENNART OOTES

Deeply immersed in thought, Vishy Anand and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave battle it out. The Frenchman reached an overwhelming position only to spoil his chances with 'le blunder' on move 30.

14.♕h5+

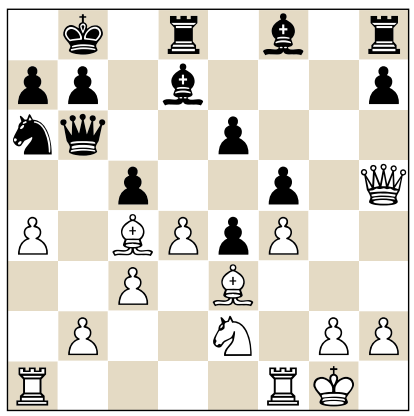


Now, when the king was threatening to escape into a long castle, it was actually time for this childish check.

14...♔d8 15.♗c4!

Now that ...c5 will be met solidly by ♘e2, I don't think there was a person in the playing room of the CC&SCSL that liked Vishy's position.

15...♔c7 16.a4!? c5 17.♘e2 ♖d8 18.♗e3 f5 19.0-0 ♔b8

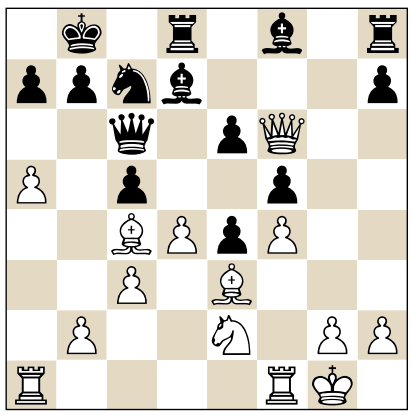


Black did manage to complete his long castle, but his whole position makes little sense. White controls the centre, the knight on a6 is awkward and Black's pawn structure is full of weaknesses. From now on, MVL is seeking to cash in on his positional advantage and starts going slightly astray.

20.♕f7?!

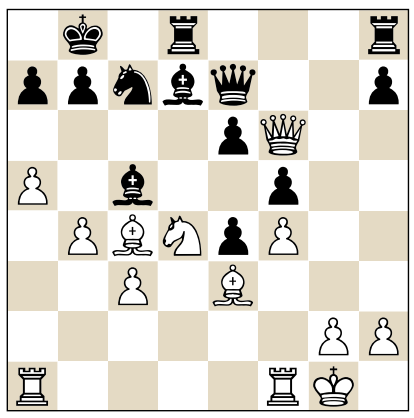
20.♖fd1! was simple and strong. A 'move first, think later' type of move.

20...♘c7 21.a5 ♕c6 22.♕f6



Once again, MVL is fishing for some concrete variations, but Vishy has an intermezzo at his disposal on move 25.

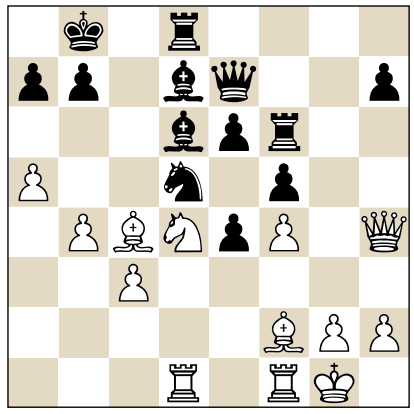
22...♗d6 23.dxc5 ♗xc5 24.♘d4 ♕d6 25.b4 ♕e7!



Saving the bishop, which was essential. Now Black is kind of back in business.

26.♕h6 ♗d6 27.♖ad1 ♖hf8 28.♗f2! That's a nasty little move.

28...♖f6 29.♕h4 29.♕h3!? wins an exchange, but Black gets a pawn and some compensation after 29...♗xf4 30.♗h4 ♗e5. **29...♘d5**



30.♘xe6??

Le blunder. A rare occurrence in the practice of the ever-sharp MVL.

30.♗xd5! exd5 31.♕h3! (followed by 32.♕e3) would keep White firmly in the driver's seat. This last move is the key. It's not obvious, but essential. ♗h4 is a threat and if Black defends against it, with let's say 31...♕g7, then White sets up a devastating diagonal action: 32.♕e3!, followed by the d4-knight moving away and saying Hi to the pawn on a7.

30...♗xe6 31.♗xd5 e3!

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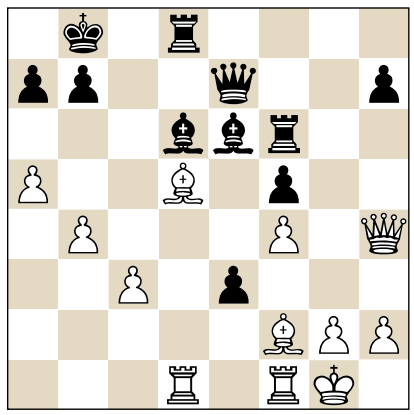


Without trading on d5. If the f2-bishop moves, there is ...e2!, forking the rooks.

32.♗xe3 ♗xd5 33.♗xa7+ ♔xa7

Unfortunately for MVL, he can't really prolong the fight; the position is suddenly completely lost.

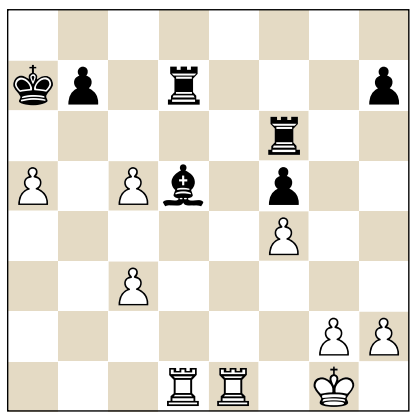
34.♕f2+

If 34.♖xd5 ♗xf4! 35.♖xd8 ♗e3+!.

34...♗c5 35.♕xc5+ ♕xc5+ 36.bxc5

On paper, White has got three pawns for the piece, but they are either weak or blocked. It's hopeless.

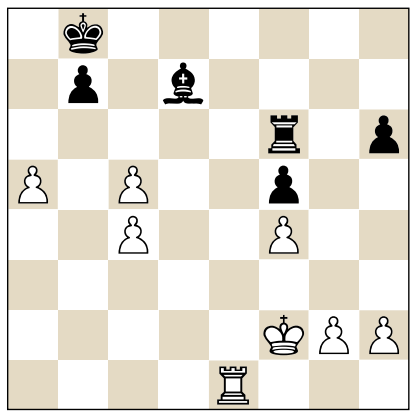
36...♖d7 37.♖fe1



37...h6 Stronger was 37...♖ff7!.

38.♔f2 ♔b8 The last two moves have not been very convincing, but Black can afford it.

39.c4 ♗c6 40.♖xd7 ♗xd7

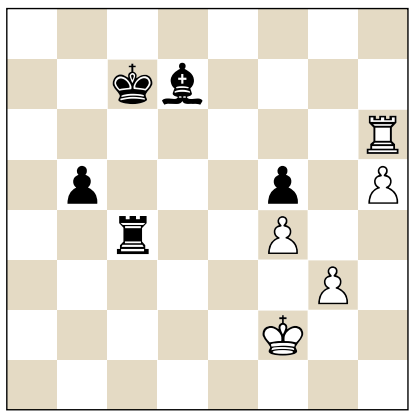


LENNART OOTES

Maurice Ashley interviews a triumphant 'Team Rex'. Garry Kasparov once again came to St. Louis to help Rex Sinquefield in the traditional Ultimate Moves match against the team of his son Randy.

41.♖b1 Vishy's time-trouble play wasn't too precise, so perhaps MVL could have put up better resistance with 41.♖e7! ♔c7 42.♔e3, followed by ♔d4 and ♖h7, and although it does look very sad for White, some technique would still be required against the best defence.

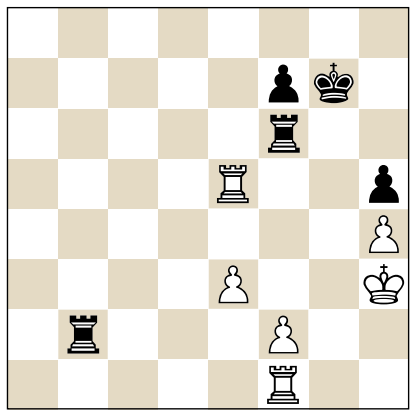
41...♖a6 42.♖b6 ♖xa5 43.♖xh6 ♖xc5 44.h4 ♖xc4 45.g3 ♔c7 46.h5 b5



White resigned. He has trouble catching the b-pawn and has no chance whatsoever. A peculiar turn-around. After this lucky take-over Vishy went on to stay unbeaten, although later on he also found fortune on his side in a few crucial rounds. Well, that's Vishy for you.

■ ■ ■

The third round, despite a flurry of five draws, was great. Fighting chess, including some weird Najdorf in Anand-Nakamura, a blunder by Topalov that almost cost him the game, and Svidler pushing hard against Caruana. However, it was the start of something dreadful for commentators, and, I can only assume, for chess viewers: after four draws we were left with a particularly long game that not much could be said about. Svidler was pushing a 4 vs. 3 double rook endgame without much hope, and we had little else to talk about in the commentary room.



Svidler-Caruana
St. Louis 2016 (3)
position after 39...♖f6

40.♖g1+ It is hard to believe that such a position is worthy of a diagram. After all, this is New In Chess, not a collection of games of Capablanca outplaying people in theoretically drawn endgames. I simply want to point out that from the moment this position arose to when the game ended, 50 minutes elapsed. From a chess point of view, I have no problems with this, but it's hard to captivate an audience. **40...♖g6 41.♖f1** 41.♖xg6+ ♔xg6 is a known drawn structure. It's possible that Black can survive taking with the f-pawn, but why even consider it? **41...♖f6 42.f4 ♖e2 43.♔g3 ♖e6 44.♔f3 ♖h2** Draw agreed.

The fourth round ended abruptly. In a couple of games, the players raced each other to vacuum the board and seal the draw. Aronian was sick, which may be why he won that race with ease. In the two games that had some future, Ding Liren took a draw in a winning position in which he had to find some computer moves, but that was winning nonetheless. MVL and Svidler agreed a draw in a position that could arguably be played on. An easy day for the commentators; can't complain. But then, it happened again.

Ding Liren and Topalov were playing out a position that every grandmaster in their right mind would play out: Veselin was up a pawn and pushing, but winning chances seemed slight with all the pawns on the same side of the board. With every other game finished, all we could do in the commentary room was wait for a draw to be reached or for Ding Liren to blunder into a loss, which he did. After seven hours of play, nearly three hours longer than any other game of that day, we were kind of glad it ended, no matter what the result.

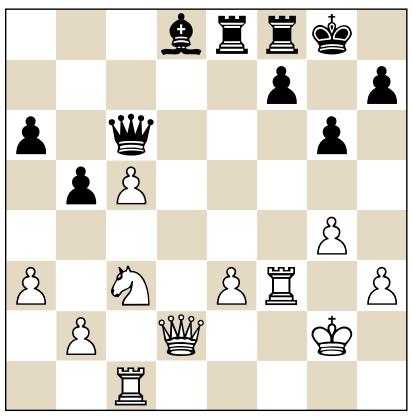
If you've been keeping up with the results in between my complaining, Topalov led with 3½/5, half a point ahead of So and Anand before the rest day. The rest days in St. Louis are always pleasant. This time the weather was nice, some players went to the awesome zoo that is a couple of miles from the club, while others simply relaxed walking around. I did the opening segment for the Internet broadcast every day, and at the start of Round 6, I said on air that players are revitalized after a rest day, and that therefore fighting and exciting chess would ensue. Peter Svidler heard me and asked me how much of what I said I believed. I simply shrugged, knowing that it was more of a hopeful thought than one based on facts or statistics.

Alas, we were rewarded with three games in which the losing players decided to beat themselves. Wesley's pragmatic preparation got him

LENNART OOTES

Although he keeps telling the world that he is less serious about his chess these days, Veselin Topalov might well have won the Sinquefield Cup if he hadn't taken an inexplicable decision against Wesley So.

an arguably slightly worse position with White against Topalov, and the Bulgarian decided to play one of the most incomprehensible moves I've seen in a while.

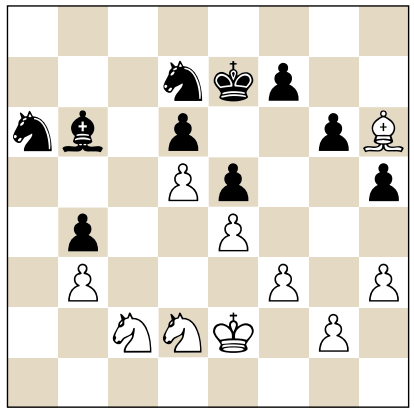


So-Topalov
St. Louis 2016 (6)
position after 32.♕d2

To me, this is the deciding point of the tournament. Veselin's position in the event was comfortable, and a draw against So would maintain his lead. He had outplayed the American so far, and one would argue that Black's position would be slightly more pleasant after simply recapturing the pawn on c5. However, Topalov didn't want to do that. **32...♖e5?** When asked why he didn't take on c5, Veselin explained that he felt White was OK in those variations. Unfortunately for him, White is much more than OK when his extra passed pawn is suddenly protected. **33.b4 ♗g5** Even if Black takes the e3-pawn somehow, it is clear that it is not worth nearly as much as the c5-pawn. **34.♖d1!** A very precise move, defusing any threats. **34...♗xe3** 34...♖xe3 35.♕d5 ♕e8! was the best way to play on, but the advantage is now with White. **35.♕d7 ♕a8 36.♘d5** White's plan of c6-c7-c8 is as unpleasant as it is difficult to defend against. **36...♗g5 37.c6 ♗h4 38.♖d2** 38.c7 immediately also works, but there is no rush. **38...♖e1 39.♖c2! ♔g7 40.♘b6 ♕b8 41.♕d4+** Defends the knight on b6 and wins the game. Black resigned.

Aronian gifted MVL a pawn from the opening and continued to suffer afterwards, while Svidler's opening choice was close to disastrous and he found himself down a queen (for a rook and minor piece) for a while until his defences collapsed. Naka drew Caruana in a Benoni (!), while Giri was unable to make much of his slight edge against Anand. Overall, a satisfying round, I would say. Perhaps the rest day had given the players a new wind!

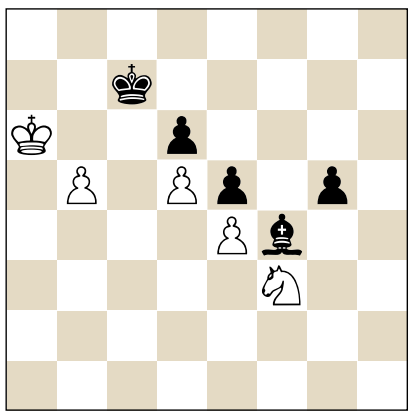
Then the commentators' nightmare struck again! A Berlin attacked us with MVL and Nakamura blitzing opening preparation and drawing five moves later. Svidler and So reached a peaceful conclusion barely passing the 30-move mark, and so did Anand and Aronian. Topalov had almost nothing against Giri and that game was drawn, leaving us yet again with the delight of the day. In a locked position Caruana tried to press against Ding Liren for seven hours. Again playing on was fully justified; it was simply terrible to watch. After 95 moves Caruana was unable to break down Ding Liren's defences, and the fifth draw of the round was reached.



Caruana-Ding Liren
St. Louis 2016 (7)
position after 45.f3

This was more or less the position when the last but one game, Topalov-Giri, finished. That game lasted about four hours and thirty minutes, long by any sports standard, but only slightly above average for a top-level chess tournament. This game, however, would clearly go on forever. White has the advantage: he can try to corral the b4-pawn and somehow win, but exactly how to do this

is far from trivial. The production crew somehow managed to convince Anish Giri to enter a planking competition with Maurice Ashley, with Eric Hansen refereeing. You can find it on YouTube and judge for yourself if Anish's form was correct. I have no expertise on this subject.

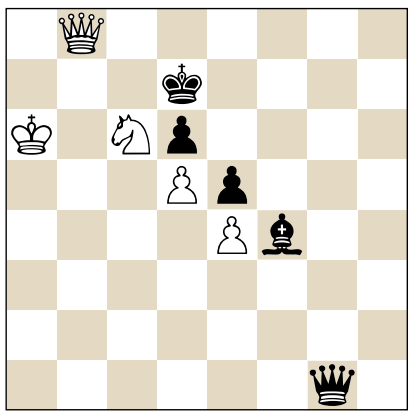


position after 73.b5

This position was reached a full two hours after the last one. A lot of manoeuvring took place, Ding Liren defended well, and now it's a draw. I say it again, this was good chess. Ding Liren was really able to withstand the pressure and Caruana just kept on trying, but it's hard to just look at this endgame for two hours. Both players were now under 10 minutes on the clock, but that did not affect the result of the game.

73...g4 73...♗e3! is much easier than what Ding Liren did. Perhaps he felt the need for some excitement.

74.b6+ ♔b8 75.♘h4 g3 76.♘f5 g2 77.♘e7 g1♕ 78.♘c6+ ♔c8 79.b7+ ♔d7 80.b8♕



Black queened first but it is clearly White who has the initiative. Luckily for Black, the queenless endgames are drawn. **80...♕f1+ 81.♔b7 ♕b5+ 82.♔a8 ♕a4+ 83.♕a7+ ♕xa7+ 84.♘xa7 ♔c7 85.♘b5+ ♔b6** 85...♔d7 also holds, but the game move is more direct. **86.♘xd6 ♔c5 87.♘f5 ♗g5** 87...♔c4 88.d6 ♗g5 89.d7 ♔d3 90.♘d6 would ruin seven hours of hard work. **88.♔b7** 88.d6 ♔c6, and White simply can't get his king out of the box: 89.♔b8 ♔d7 90.♔b7 ♗d8 91.♔a6 ♔c6, with a draw. **88...♔c4 89.d6 ♔d3 90.♘g3 ♔e3 91.d7 ♔f3 92.♘h5 ♔xe4 93.♔c6 ♔f3 94.♘g7 e4 95.♘f5** Draw. A hard-fought game, truly a titanic battle.

Round 8 had two games of 80+ moves. Aronian was winning against Nakamura for a long time and finally converted, while Svidler had to fight hard to get his win against Giri after a tremendously long game. With Wesley leading the pack on +2 after eight rounds, it was theoretically possible, though improbable, that seven (!) players would tie for first if MVL beat the American in the last round. Tony Rich scrambled to find a solution to such a problem if it arose, and rumours are he is still working on one.

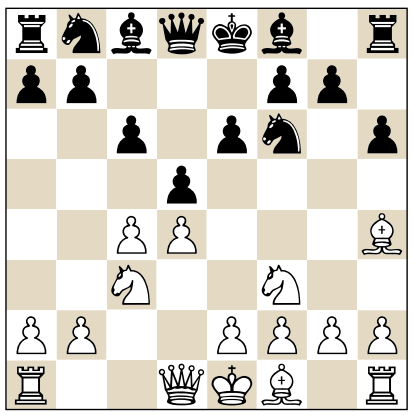
Luckily for the organizers, the Berlin once again came to the rescue. Wesley's impenetrable Berlin fortress served him well and MVL had no real chances in that game. With the old guard, Topalov, Aronian and Anand (the people on +1), all drawing their games, the tournament was won cleanly with 5½/9. True, Topalov had yet another huge chance in the tournament, as he had a winning position against Aronian, but he completely blindsided his win. A win there would have forced tiebreaks for the first time in Sinquefield Cup history. Nakamura beat Ding Liren in a very strange game (though it was one of the only attacking games of the entire tournament), while Caruana defeated Giri with nice technique. Caruana's eight draws and one win were, naturally, sufficient to tie for second.

An attacking game is always fun, so here is Nakamura's win against the Chinese number one.

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

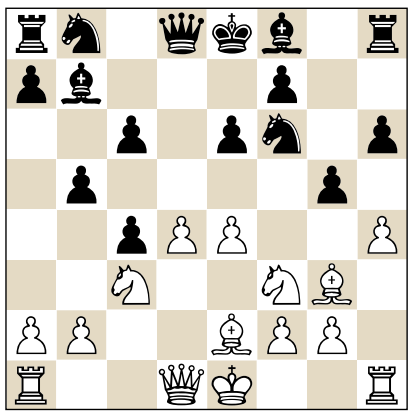
SL 6.6 – D43
Hikaru Nakamura
Ding Liren
St. Louis 2016 (9)

The following game, by one of the American hopes, Hikaru Nakamura, is a good answer to the question 'How to finish a tournament on a high note?' His opponent, the ever-tough Ding Liren, is never an easy opponent.
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6 5.♗g5 h6 6.♗h4



This variation, the so-called Anti-Moscow, has not been too fashionable lately, probably due to the degree of randomness in the positions that arise. Having said that, this was exactly what I had expected from Hikaru before our game in Round 2, and no wonder he repeated it against Ding Liren. As practice shows, White takes at least as much risk here as Black, but when one is better prepared, the odds shift.

6...dxc4 7.e4 g5 8.♗g3 b5 9.♗e2 ♗b7 10.h4

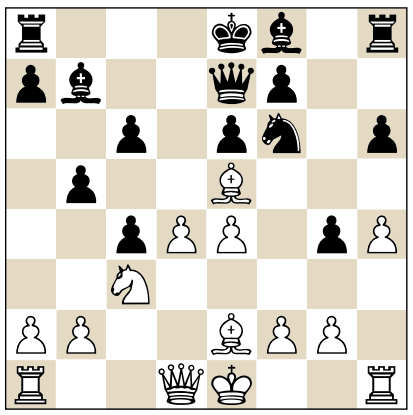


One of the many main lines in this system.

10...g4 11.♘e5 ♘bd7

The move with the best reputation. 11...h5 is the old main line, in which things are somewhat murky, whereas 11...♖g8 looks a little cheeky.

12.♘xd7 ♕xd7 13.♗e5 ♕e7



14.b3!?

Mixing up the move order somewhat. Ding, who had already spent some time here, was bound to get confused. 14.0-0 is more common at the highest level. One big game continued with 14...♖g8 15.b3 ♘d7 16.♗g3 b4 17.♘a4 c3, with a very peculiar pawn structure. This game was played between Alexander Grischuk and my big hero Levon Aronian. Back in 2009, before Uncle Lev became a doctor.

14...cxb3

The reaction of Aronian from 2009 wouldn't work here.

After 14...b4? 15.♘a4! c3 16.♘c5! Black is tied up. Note that in the game Grischuk-Aronian, the white knight was stuck on a4.

15.axb3 a6

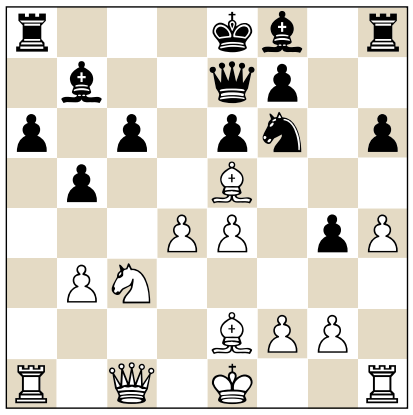
In hindsight, something more dynamic was probably required.

15...♗g7!? was played by another famous uncle, Uncle Loek, back in 2008: 16.0-0 0-0 17.♗xg4 c5, Werle-Van Wely, London 2008. Eventually, Black went on to win this game as well. Hikaru must have had something in mind here, though, and indeed, as Maurice Ashley, another hero of mine (I have many heroes these days), might say, 'The engine goes wild here, giving White an advantage of half a pawn'.

16.♕c1

I don't quite see the need for this subtlety. White could probably have started with 0-0 as well.

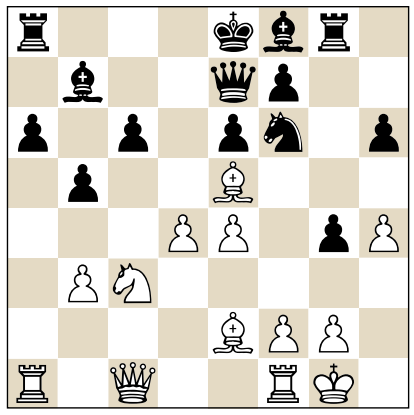
In fact, 16.0-0 would perhaps be even more precise. Now ...h5 looks less appealing, as the queen has not committed itself to c1. Still, Black has plenty of options to continue a complicated fight, either with 16...h5 or with 16...♗g7!?, in the same style as Werle-Van Wely, trying to castle before it's too late.



16...♖g8

16...h5!?, intending ...♗h6, was an option as well, although the position after 17.0-0 (17.♕f4 ♖h6! 18.0-0 ♘d7) 17...♗h6 18.♗f4 ♗xf4 19.♕xf4 looks nice for White. Having said that, after the typical 19...e5!? 20.dxe5 ♘d7 21.e6! fxe6 22.e5 0-0-0!? the game takes a random course, which is probably quite favourable for Black. Back in the years 2006-2008, Vishy Anand had plenty of such games as Black.

17.0-0



17...♘h5?!

The logical follow-up in a way, but at the same time this feels way too naive. The strike in the centre that follows is

LENNART OOTES

With a flashy knight sacrifice Hikaru Nakamura crashed through Ding Liren's defences to end his tournament on a high note.

Grand Chess Tour 2016

Standings after Paris, Leuven and St. Louis

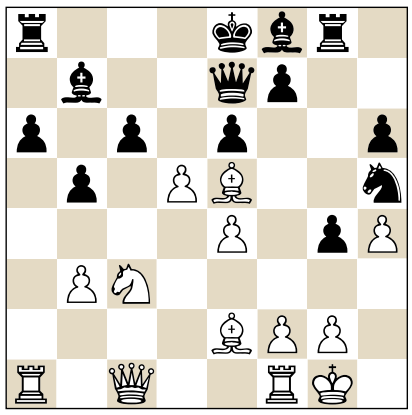
		POINTS	PRIZE MONEY
1	Wesley So	30	$120,000
2	Levon Aronian	21.75	$66,250
3	Hikaru Nakamura	21.5	$62,500
4	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	17.5	$40,000
5	Fabiano Caruana	16.75	$58,750
6	Vishy Anand	14.75	$51,250
7	Veselin Topalov	10.75	$51,250
8	Anish Giri	8.5	$30,000
*	Magnus Carlsen	23	$67,500
*	Vladimir Kramnik	6.5	$15,000
*	Ding Liren	3	$15,000
*	Peter Svidler	2	$15,000
*	Laurent Fressinet	1	$7,500

* Wildcard – not eligible for the overall prize

obvious, although the ensuing variations are not.

17...♘d7!? would be another way to justify the previous move, and a slightly tighter way to play the position: 18.♗g3 e5!?. I wouldn't be overly excited with this strike, given Black's lack of coordination at the moment, but after a few more good moves this will make more sense: 19.dxe5 h5! 20.♖d1 ♖g6!, and once the bishop develops itself to h6 or g7, the e5-pawn will be regained and the position will begin to make some sense. I am not saying that Black is doing so great, but by this point he should be satisfied with this position. The game-move allows White to take the initiative for real.

18.d5!



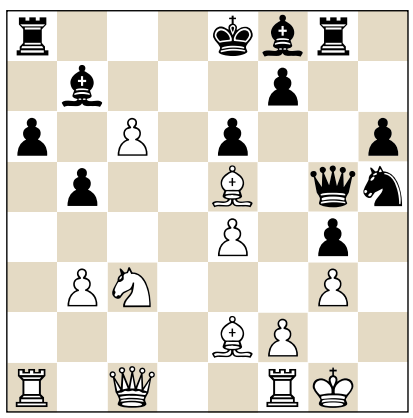
18...♕xh4?

This just loses. Ding Liren had probably overlooked something, as the intermezzo that follows on move 20 is not obvious. The correct move doesn't look too inspiring either, but it was time to put things into perspective.

18...exd5 19.exd5 ♕xe5 has a fishy feel to it, and indeed 20.♖e1! ♗e7 21.♗xb5 is devastating. The best defence is 21...♕c7! 22.dxc6 axb5 23.♖xa8+ ♗xa8 24.♘d5 ♕xc6 25.♕xc6+ ♗xc6 26.♘xe7, with a very bad endgame for Black after, for example, 26...♖g7 27.♘xc6+.

18...f6! was the best way to go about things, even though it's uglier than ugly: 19.♗h2 cxd5 20.exd5 ♔f7, and while I would be a liar if I told you that this is fine for Black, I have some higher powers here promising me that the king will find a safe haven on h8. Maybe.

19.g3! ♕g5 20.dxc6!

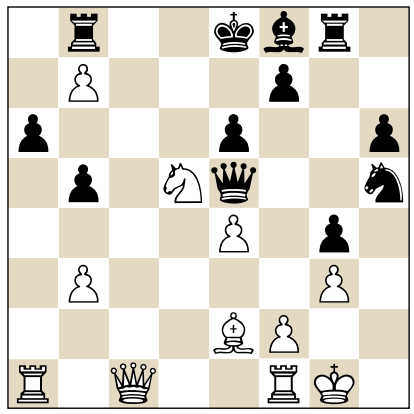


The key. Now the queen trade, which seemed inevitable, can be avoided.

20...♕xe5

Taking on c1 is obviously not possible, and 20...♗xc6 runs into 21.♘xb5!.

21.cxb7 ♖b8 22.♘d5!



Flashy, but Hikaru would play this in a bullet game. Actually, even I would play it in a bullet game.

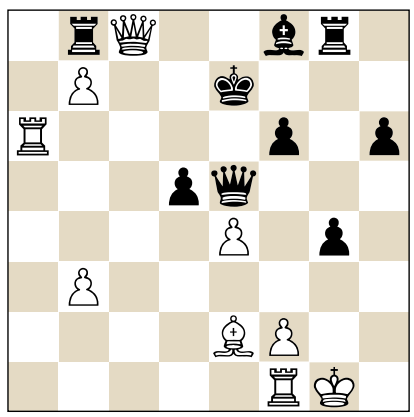
22...exd5 23.♕c8+ ♔e7 24.♖xa6

Complete destruction is inevitable.

24...♘xg3 This is less counterplay than desperation.

24...♗g7 fails to 25.♕c5+!.

25.♗xb5! ♘e2+ 26.♗xe2 f6



Everything wins; hence Hikaru's pragmatic solution. **27.♖e6+ ♕xe6 28.♕xb8** Black resigned.

A good illustration of how quickly things can go wrong in a complicated position, even at the highest level... And simply a nice game.

■ ■ ■

St. Louis 2016 — cat. XXII

					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		TPR
1	Wesley So	IGM	USA	2771	*	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	½	5½	2859
2	Fabiano Caruana	IGM	USA	2807	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	5	2818
3	Levon Aronian	IGM	ARM	2792	½	½	*	½	½	0	1	½	1	½	5	2820
4	Vishy Anand	IGM	IND	2770	½	½	½	*	½	1	½	½	½	½	5	2823
5	Veselin Topalov	IGM	BUL	2761	0	½	½	½	*	½	½	1	1	½	5	2824
6	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	IGM	FRA	2819	½	½	1	0	½	*	½	½	½	½	4½	2774
7	Hikaru Nakamura	IGM	USA	2791	0	½	0	½	½	½	*	1	½	1	4½	2777
8	Ding Liren	IGM	CHN	2755	½	½	½	½	0	½	0	*	1	½	4	2738
9	Peter Svidler	IGM	RUS	2751	½	½	0	½	0	½	½	0	*	1	3½	2702
10	Anish Giri	IGM	NED	2769	½	0	½	½	½	½	0	½	0	*	3	2655

LENNART OOTES

That's what true support looks like. As Wesley So's proud stepsister Abbey is about to embrace him, his stepparents Renato Kabigting and Lotis Key share in their happiness.

Overall the tournament wasn't a bad one. The quality of play was high, and the players tried their best. It just was difficult to watch. With the Olympics and the Dota 2 International (for those unfamiliar, the largest video game tournament in history, with a 20 million USD prize-fund) as the main competition, I would find it hard to believe that the average spectator would tune in for three hours of a 4 vs. 3 rook endgame rather than any obscure Olympic sport. Perhaps you, the reader, did stay with us for those long and exciting endgames, but remember that you, the person reading a recap of a tournament in the best chess magazine in the world, are already more interested in chess than the average aficionado. I worry about the popularity of chess if rounds like this become the norm. With such wonderful viewership for the Paris and Leuven Grand Chess Tour, I hope that chess can continue to gather the attention that is has lately.

My own thoughts on how to avoid the situations we had in the 2016 Sinquefield would require another article, and, quite frankly, are more radical than perhaps is needed.

Wesley So

I would be completely amiss if I didn't talk about the tournament winner in more detail. Wesley is an interesting figure in chess. Despite being a top-10 player now, he is relatively less well-known than the others. He hasn't been around at the top as long as Nakamura, nor has he had any of the multiple flashes of brilliance of Caruana. He doesn't have the age and history of Kramnik, nor has he participated in as many top-level events as Giri. Tony Rich observed how impressive it was that Wesley went from sharing last in last year's Sinquefield Cup to winning it outright this year. Wesley, of course, corrected him: 'Actually, I finished dead last the previous year', said the winner. His life's controversies, which were quite public last year (see New In Chess 2015/4), seem to have settled down, and it is clear that it has changed him as a person in some ways. His attire and speech at the closing ceremony made it clear that religion comes first in his life, something that might irk a well-known NIC columnist, but appears to have brought him stability and confidence. He is still his humble and pleasant self, just more difficult to approach.

'Wesley, of course, corrected him: "Actually, I finished dead last the previous year", said the winner.'

I described Wesley's approach earlier as pragmatic, and truly there is no better word to describe his style. He will sit patiently in relatively equal positions, and if his opponent makes a mistake or blunders, he will pounce, but if his opponent does nothing then he is happy not to force the issue. His decision to force a quick draw with the white pieces against Caruana in Round 8 struck many players as weird. 'Magnus would never have done that', said several participants. Some criticize him for his lack of ambition, but perhaps it was this sedate approach that allowed him to win this tournament. It was clear to everyone that this was an important victory for Wesley. As some players mentioned, financially it was quite important for him, since he has not won any major event yet, and emotionally it should be a big confidence booster. Wesley entered the last game against MVL very nervously. This was apparent when he went to the bathroom, somehow knocking over a flower vase, fumbling to save it and cutting himself slightly. But he picked himself up and erected his fortress. For America, this is undoubtedly a good sign: the Olympiad is right around the corner and their third board just won one of the toughest events of the year. Everyone expected Wesley to shine in some event, and his time finally came. It was appropriate that his style in the 2016 Sinquefield Cup really summarized the tournament: good, but void of magic. ■

Caspian Capers

In 2006-7, I enjoyed a brief and fairly successful stint as national coach of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Professional satisfaction notwithstanding, I nevertheless felt immensely relieved when my tenure ended. It was lovely to have made some friendships, but when working in a theocracy, one also inevitably crosses paths with bigots – like the religious police. Their overbearing intolerance, unpleasantness and stupidity can test the patience of far more emollient characters than mine.

Despite these reservations, I was pleased to be invited, by my dear old buddy Mehrdad Pahlevanzadeh, the recently appointed president of the federation, to a Scheveningen System tournament, in the Anzali Free Zone, on the Caspian Sea. It plugged a gaping hole in my diary and, besides, it also provided the welcome opportunity to see a different city.

At the risk of sounding a trifle haughty, it is fair to say that organization in this region does not always run as smoothly as it does in the more orderly parts of Europe. It took me so long to receive an official stamped letter of invitation that I spent my last few days franticly making phone calls, sending e-mails, and rushing back and forth to the Iranian Consulate. On the morning of my departure, I woke up without either a passport containing a valid visa, or even a plane ticket. By now, I was totally reconciled to spending the next fortnight at home should any further obstacle appear.

It didn't. Thanks to an upgrade to business class on Aegean Air, I disembarked quickly at Imam Khomeini Airport and then proceeded through border control 'without let or hindrance', as Her Britannic Majesty's Secretary of State pompously requests and requires. Comfortingly, a man from the federation, holding a placard, was waiting to greet me. All was apparently running smoothly and my perturbation momentarily ceased. Alongside this welcoming fellow was the familiar face of Uzbekistan grandmaster Jahongir Vakhidov, whose plane had landed half an hour previously. It was already past 2 a.m. People were tired. Obviously we would retire to a nearby hotel to rest. What else?

The first disagreeable surprise was to be informed that we had to wait for a colleague, Jaan Ehlvest. This became worrying when I learned that he had been on Jahongir's flight from Moscow. The clearly visible baggage carousel was deserted as all other passengers had long since left. Knowing Jaan well, I postulated that my Estonian contemporary had fully availed himself on board of his last opportunity for lubrication for a fortnight, and was probably as pissed as a newt somewhere in the terminal. God only knew if or when he would emerge. In fraternal spirit, I suggested that we should abandon him forthwith.

Our federation man clearly had different instructions: 'Five more minutes' was the reply, which became a tedious mantra of procrastination for the next hour or so. A new tale slowly unfolded. Ehlvest had applied for visa-on-arrival but, lacking foresight, had brought insufficient cash. This problem obviously wasn't going to be resolved quickly, as he was on the wrong side of security. By now I was highly irritated and expressed my displeasure. With great reluctance our minder relented. Jahongir and I were then ushered into a taxi whereupon, after more delays, we were driven off – to Anzali, five and half hours away! I could not believe it. As a chess player one must expect different customs but, under the Geneva Convention, sleep deprivation is defined as torture. Surely, even in Iran they must have heard of that? It was not until after 9 a.m. that I was finally able to lay my weary head on a pillow.

Thankfully I had some time to recover. The hotel, without being luxurious, was bonny enough and right by the sea, although the murky water and dead fish were sufficient to deter all but the most adventurous swimmer. The following day all players gathered for a communal lunch. Rumour was that both Anatoly Karpov and Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, who were in Tehran, would attend the opening ceremony at 5 p.m. A compulsory blitz tournament was scheduled for later. Knowing the excessive reverence accorded to dignitaries, I had a deep sense of foreboding. I asked the good-natured organiser, Kiumars Bayat, whether we would start punctually. Of course, he replied, with a smile. About 5 minutes later, however, he suddenly announced the ceremony would begin at 6 p.m.

To our consternation, we discovered the venue was not in the hotel but "about 30 minutes" drive away, by bus. This turned out to be obscenely optimistic. It

was double that or more, depending on the traffic. No matter: there was not a snowball in hell's chance the ceremony would begin as promised. Hours late, the Russian panjandrums eventually swept in along with the local dignitaries. Kirsan delivered his usual excruciating oratory – a cascade of poppycock, balderdash and flapdoodle. Ominously, he vouched that FIDE would look favourably on Iran hosting the Chess Olympiad (they are planning a bid for 2022) despite the discriminatory obligation of women to wear the Islamic hijab being an egregious breach of statutes.

By now we were running so much behind schedule, and with a long bus journey in front of us, that I informed Mehrdad I was withdrawing from the blitz.

'Ominously, he vouched that FIDE would look favourably on Iran hosting the Chess Olympiad despite the discriminatory obligation of women to wear the Islamic hijab being an egregious breach of statutes.'

It was utterly ridiculous to expect serious chess players to participate under the circumstances. Despite the voluble curses from my foreign colleagues, not one of them joined my industrial action, so cowed have grandmasters collectively become. Feebly, I buckled by consenting to a symbolic game, ostensibly for the photographers – which I lost miserably, with White, to 15 year-old Parham Maghsoodloo. But, at least, I escaped in time for a proper dinner. The others, who got back past midnight, had to settle for fast food along the way.

After breakfast the next morning, I bumped into Ehsan Ghaem-Maghami, the most senior Iranian player, and quasi-organiser, who informed me that I should pack my suitcase as we were changing hotels. Our new accommodation, in the city of Rasht, was, in fairness, of higher quality, but completely failed to address the fundamental problem that we were still miles from the venue. On the long journey to the playing hall, I learned from Evgeny Miroshnichenko, who would become my constant interlocutor, that our "World Stars" team had won comfortably, despite my absence. Evgeny was particularly delighted with his last-round victory over Parham, who had nevertheless top-scored for the home side with 8/10, making a 2860 performance. As I was playing the kid again that afternoon, I should have recognised this brilliant result as an omen, but instead casually dismissed it as an aberration. It almost cost me dear.

After obtaining a pleasant advantage from the opening, I failed to find an incisive plan, allowing my opponent to equalise. Multiple exchanges followed, but I then made one almost imperceptible inaccuracy. Despite possessing only a modest 2501 Elo, he declined my not unreasonable endgame draw offer without hesitation, and proceeded to outplay me. With my position on the precipice, he erred, however, and I escaped.

It quickly transpired that I had dodged a bullet from a young man in rampant form. In a display worthy of Magnus Carlsen, Maghsoodloo racked up 8/10 against 2620+ opposition, gaining 46.3 Elo points in the process. Despite glaring weaknesses in his armoury – not least a deficient knowledge of openings – he combined remarkable tactical acumen with extraordinary energy and fearlessness. His ability to save and even win the most dire positions, the best example of which was against Lu Shanglei, was deeply impressive.

Although Maghsoodloo was the stand-out performer in Anzali, he is by no means an isolated talent: Iran possesses a fresh generation of enormous potential. At just 12, Alireza Firouzja is the ridiculously young reigning national champion. The runner-up in that event, Aryan Gholami – who bears a striking resemblance to Harry Potter – is just two years older. 17 year-old Shahin Lorparizanganeh narrowly missed out on a GM result, and so on.

Given the fact that the format was selected primarily to provide experience and norm opportunities for the home side, it seems a bit churlish to mention that the mostly middle-aged "World Stars" team won. Top scorer was yours truly, with 8.5/10. The whole fortnight was so incredibly stressful that I can hardly believe that I managed to play so well. To save energy, I didn't once step outside the hotel, except to clamber on the bus to the games. When not surfing banned social media, I studied chess extensively. It cannot be described as a thrilling regimen, but it worked.

It came as no surprise whatsoever that, immediately after our event, the Iranian team stormed to victory at the World-Under 16 Olympiad in Slovakia, routing Russia along the way. Plans are afoot for a repeat of Anzali in 2017. But to persuade highly disgruntled foreigners to return, huge improvements will have to be made. There is a strong, domestic willingness to succeed, so who knows? ■

Opposite-coloured Bishops boring?

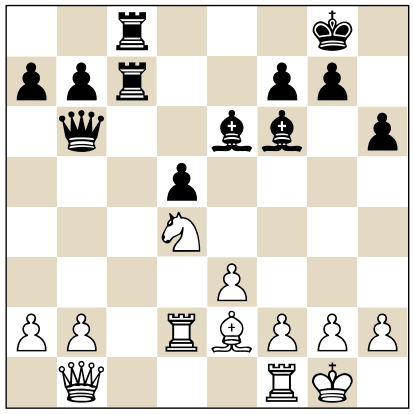
Opposite-coloured bishops have an infamous reputation. But **PARIMARJAN NEGI** shows that being alert for the exceptions will yield you dividends.

We have all experienced the completely drawn endgames that opposite-coloured bishops more often than not result in. But actually, OCBs have some very unique characteristics that can bring seemingly equal positions to life – as long as there are other pieces present on the board.

The first question is, why are the OCB endgames so drawish? This is essentially because one bishop can never control the squares of the other one. This makes it easy for the defensive side to set up blockades on the squares of the colour of his bishop.

But this very property can serve a very different purpose in the middle game. If you have a potential for initiative, then the OCB can be your secret weapon. The bishop essentially becomes an unchallenged extra piece.

There are many examples illustrating the attacking powers of the OCB. I like the following classic, because it nicely illustrates ideas for both the defender and the attacker.

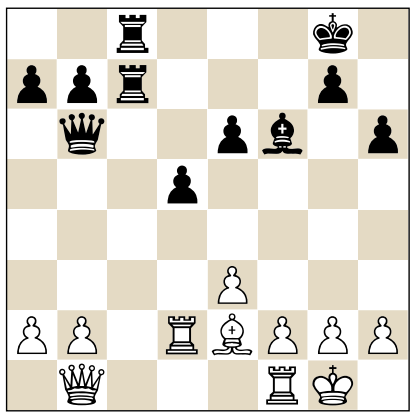


Karpov-Kasparov
Moscow 1985 (match-4)
position after 20...♖dc8

Black appears to be doing fine here. The isolated pawn on d5 is weak, but it's hard for White to really target it.

21.♘xe6! A very counter-intuitive move! Usually, White's main focus is on keeping the d5-pawn weak, but this move allows Black to reconnect the pawns with ...fxe6 and get a fairly strong centre.

21...fxe6



The critical position. Neither bishop is bad, but it is obvious that Black's kingside has more weaknesses. But as both players surely realized, there is no easy way to punish Black for it quickly. Instead, White needs to visualize his long-term goal. After consolidating the queenside, he can eventually bring the light-squared bishop to the b1-h7 diagonal, and if Black doesn't create enough counterplay, it could become very strong.

With hindsight, you might consider 21...♕xe6 to be a better move. But it would have been much more passive.

22.♗g4!?

Just targeting the newly created weakness, and hoping to annoy Black a bit. White still needs to do a lot of regrouping, and this way he prevents the black queen from interfering on the queenside.

Kasparov probably considered immediate attempts to go after White's king like 22.♕g6, which isn't really dangerous, as after ♗d3 there is no mating threat. So Black could, for instance, just play 22...♖c1 23.♗d3 ♔f8, and White would have to worry more about his queenside than Black about his kingside.

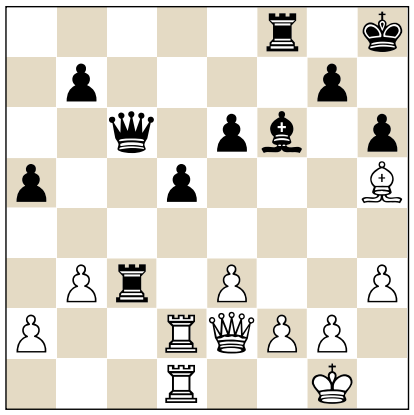
22...♖c4

Setting up a ♖ + ♕ + ♖ battery on the c-file, perhaps in order to play ...♖c1. It doesn't really help Black, but then there was no clear plan for him in its stead.

23.h3 ♕c6 24.♕d3

White is not in a hurry at all. But he does have a plan, as you will see.

24...♔h8 25.♖fd1 a5 26.b3 ♖c3 27.♕e2 ♖f8 28.♗h5!

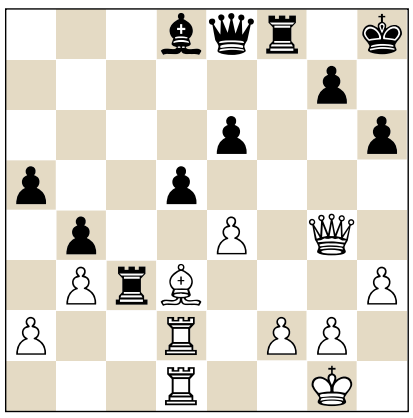


Now that the queenside has been completely consolidated, and the white pieces have been improved, it's time to bring the bishop to the diagonal where it belongs! The computer still thinks Black is OK, but during the game, I am sure Kasparov was feeling very uncomfortable. The very thought of having the white bishop and queen on the b1-h7 diagonal is scary, because there is no way for Black to fight back on the light squares!

28...b5 29.♗g6 ♗d8!

An interesting regrouping. Black's bishop didn't look so bad, but it was doing nothing at all on f6. From b6, or c7, it could have real targets...

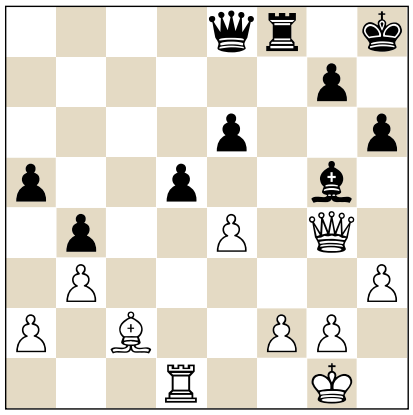
30.♗d3 b4 31.♕g4 ♕e8 32.e4



32...♗g5?!

32...♗b6!, putting some pressure on f2, would have been much more troubling for White. At least, White no longer has the freedom to do whatever he wants.

33.♖c2 ♖xc2 34.♗xc2

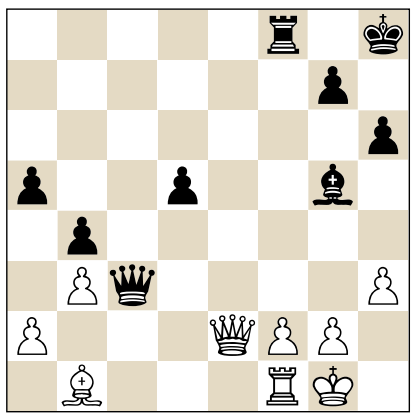


34...♕c6?

34...♗d8! was the best move here – once again creating counterplay for his own bishop was the most important thing.

'The ability to visualize the potential of your pieces in the long term is the key to correctly assessing these positions.'

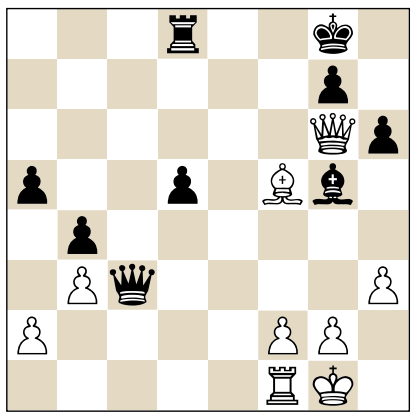
35.♕e2 ♕c5 36.♖f1 ♕c3 37.exd5 exd5 38.♗b1



And White manages to avoid all queen exchanges. Even though the rook on f1 is stuck, the bishop + queen combination is enough to create problems for Black.

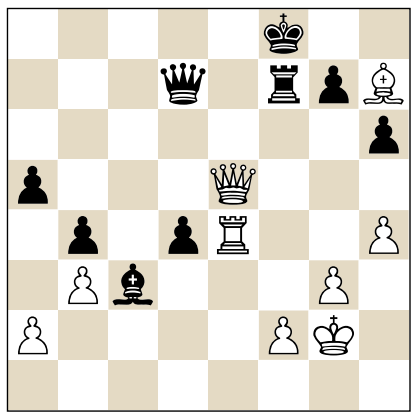
38...♕d2 39.♕e5! White is ready to go ♕d6 – ♕g6, and Black can't really prevent it any longer.

39...♖d8 40.♕f5 ♔g8 41.♕e6+ ♔h8 42.♕g6 ♔g8 43.♕e6+ ♔h8 44.♗f5 ♕c3 45.♕g6 ♔g8 46.♗e6+ ♔h8 47.♗f5 ♔g8



The queen + bishop alone cannot do much damage, so White starts the process of bringing in his rook. First he needs to ensure that the white king will remain safe.

48.g3! ♔f8 49.♔g2 ♕f6 50.♕h7 ♕f7 51.h4 ♗d2 52.♖d1 ♗c3 53.♖d3 ♖d6 54.♖f3 ♔e7 55.♕h8 d4 56.♕c8 ♖f6 57.♕c5+ ♔e8 58.♖f4 ♕b7+ 59.♖e4+ ♔f7 60.♕c4+ ♔f8 61.♗h7 ♖f7 62.♕e6 ♕d7 63.♕e5

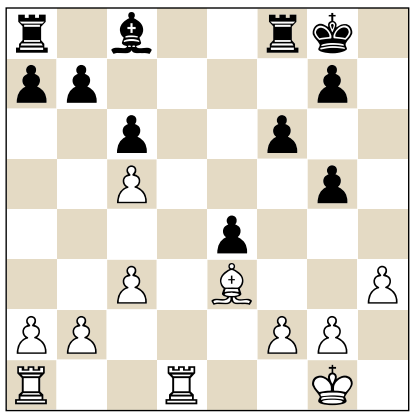


Black resigned. In the last few moves, it was as if White was basically attacking with an extra piece!

Note that Black could have defended better by using the same strategy as White. If only he had used his bishop in a more aggressive capacity as well – from b6. This is perhaps the best defensive tip in such OCB middle games. Make sure you realize where your bishop can be the most effective.

Also, White's ideas didn't really depend on concrete lines – there was no easy way to exploit the light-squared bishop immediately, and Black's bishop didn't look too bad either. But Karpov visualized what he could eventually achieve on the light squares. The ability to visualize the potential of your pieces in the long term is the key to correctly assessing these positions.

In the next game, things appear to be completely equal at first. The players might reasonably even have agreed to a draw here. This just shows that one of the most useful skills is to be able to realize if you are better or not and play accordingly. As we just put it, to visualize the potential of your pieces that might not be immediately obvious.



Anand-Karjakin
Moscow Candidates 2016 (11)
position after 21...g5

Black's position looks perfectly solid. Opposite-coloured bishops, and White's four queenside pawns would appear to be blocked nicely by just three of Black's pawns. But the crucial thing here is the open d-file. It is the only source of activity for both players, and for now White has complete control of it. Another subtle point is that the black bishop is actually worse – it doesn't really have much activity to look forward to. If you don't believe me, look at the bishop after about 10 moves! And as for Black's extra pawn on the kingside – he can't really convert it to a passed pawn, so there isn't much he can do with it. Even then, White's advantage does seem very minimal here. But there are some other plans for White as well – which I am sure Anand had already started to visualize...

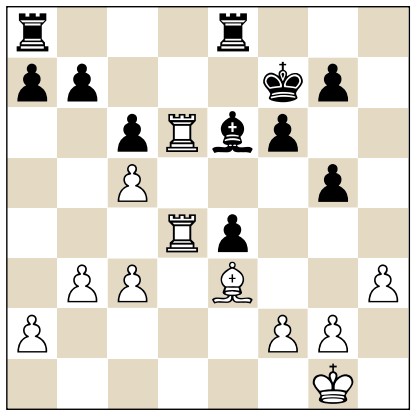
22.♖d6!

A key idea for White is that even if Black manages to bring his rook to challenge the d-file (for example, after ♖e8-♖e7-♖c8-♖cc7-♖d7), the rook exchange would let White put a pawn on d6, which is not necessarily what Black wants...

22...♖e8

22...g4 might be possible, but White would go h4, and it is not really clear if this helps Black or not. Maybe it will even create a path for the white king – ♔h2-♔g3-♔f4. This is one of the things you will often see in such endgames – the defending side has many options, and your aim is to ensure that he doesn't have any way to equalize by force. As long as that is the case, it is always hard to choose between many different set-ups, all of which seem slightly worse.

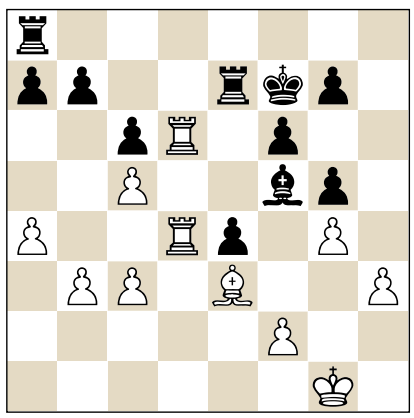
23.♖ad1 ♗e6 24.b3 ♔f7 25.♖1d4



25...♗f5

With hindsight, I would say that trying to hold on to the e4-pawn wasn't the best strategy. It left Black extremely inactive, and gave White enough time to pursue his plans. Instead, if Black had just given up the pawn, perhaps the activity would have been worth it. 25...♗d5!? would give up the pawn, but c4 would be a useful provocation, as the white rook wouldn't be able to trouble Black with ♖b4, etc. And the black bishop will be more active: 26.c4 ♗e6 27.♖xe4 ♗f5 28.♖ed4 a5, and at least Black is getting some counterplay.

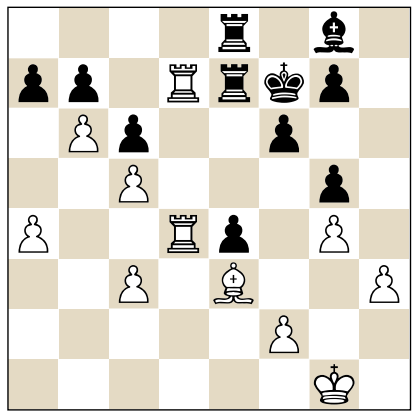
26.a4 ♖e7 27.g4



27...♗h7? Playing ...♗f5 was OK, but it set in motion Black's strategy to hold on to the e4-pawn at all costs, which led to the mistake here. I think the main issue was that Karjakin couldn't really see a way for White to improve, so he thought he could safely remain passive for the rest of the game. After 27...♗e6! 28.c4 ♖h8 29.♔g2 ♗c8 the bishop is probably somewhat better placed, and Black has ideas like ...f5 in the future. And it will be better able to deal with the pressure on the queenside.

28.b4! It doesn't feel as if White is getting much done on the queenside, but pushing the pawns is putting serious pressure on Black.

28...♗g8 29.b5 ♖c8 30.♖d7 ♖ce8 31.b6!



The key idea that White had to visualize beforehand. Even though everything on the queenside is still blocked, this lets him create totally new threats with ♖c7.

31...a6 32.♖c7 ♔f8

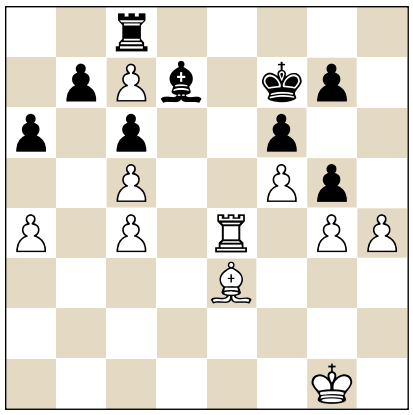
32...♖xc7 was perhaps a better defensive move – but again, it is a bit worse in the end, which makes it a hard decision during the game: 33.bxc7 ♖c8 34.♖d7+ ♔e8 35.♖xg7 ♔f8 36.♖d7 ♔e8 37.♖d4 ♖xc7 38.♖xe4+ ♖e7 39.♖b4.

33.c4 ♗e6 34.♖xe4 ♔f7 35.f4 ♖xc7 36.bxc7 ♖c8

After 36...♗c8 37.♖xe8 ♔xe8 38.fxg5, the rook exchange might not be as good because White's two extra (passed) pawns might prove to be quite enough to win.

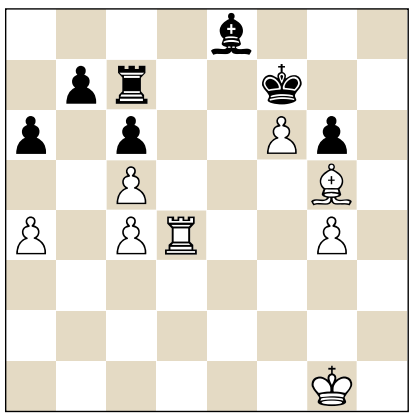
36...f5! was a better defensive attempt. Swapping the rooks is crucial, but here, White still seems to have good chances by avoiding the rook exchange: 37.♖d4! ♖c8 38.fxg5 ♖xc7 39.h4! fxg4 40.h5. It is possible to analyse this a lot more – but in a nutshell: with the pawn on g6, White would have constant threats like ♖e4, ♗d4, etc. E.g. 40...♖d7 41.♖f4+ ♔g8 42.g6.

37.f5 ♗d7 38.h4!



Now it's just bad for Black. With some tactics, White is able to keep a strong extra pawn.

38...g6 39.♖d4 ♖xc7 40.hxg5 fxg5 41.♗xg5 ♗e8 42.f6

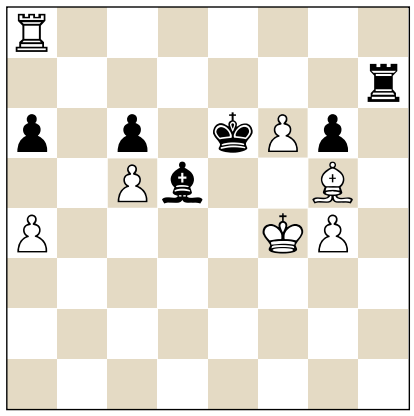


One of the key skills in such endgames is the ability to try different plans without really spoiling your position. If you are ahead, and your opponent has no ways to improve his position, then there is no need to hurry to find the very best plan. It is often much more annoying for the defender if the other guy just tries a mix of plans without making any committal changes to the position. This is basically the plan Anand follows for the rest of the game.

42...♔f8 43.♗f4

43.♗h6+ ♔f7 44.♖e4 was a more forcing and perhaps stronger way, but as I just wrote above, White shouldn't try to do hurry things.

43...♖h7 44.♔g2 ♗d7 45.♗g5 ♗e6 46.♖d8+ ♔f7 47.♖b8 ♗xc4 48.♖xb7+ ♔g8 49.♖b8+ ♔f7 50.♔g3 ♔e6 51.♖e8+ ♔f7 52.♖c8 ♗d5 53.♔f4 ♔e6 54.♖e8+ ♔d7 55.♖a8 ♔e6

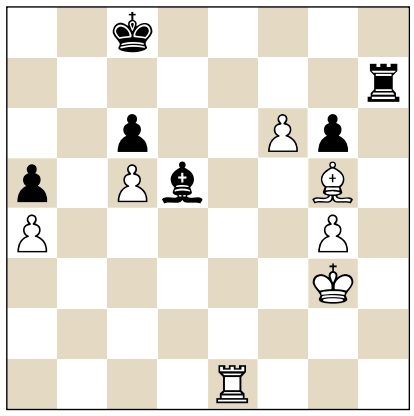


An interesting moment. White realizes he cannot play 56.♖xa6, because of 56...♖h3, with a devastating mating threat. But that doesn't matter – he can easily switch to other plans.

56.♖e8+ ♔d7 57.♖e3 a5?!

This perhaps makes things easier for White, although Black didn't have a fun job even if he could hold on to the pawn on a6.

58.♔g3 ♖f7 59.♔f4 ♖h7 60.♖e1 ♔c8 61.♔g3



61...♖f7

61...♔d7 62.♗d2 is one of the new ideas that playing ...a5 gave White.

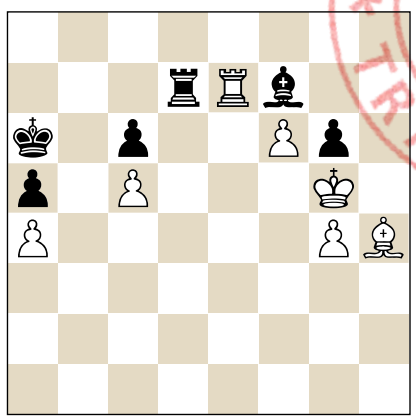
62.♖e8+ ♔d7 63.♖a8

Black can actually defend the a5-pawn, as Karjakin probably foresaw when he played 57...a5, with **63...♔c7** , and if now 64.♖xa5, the white rook will get stuck there after 64...♔b7. But now the black king has been stuck there for a bit... and White can bring his own king in.

64.♔f4 ♖d7 65.♗h4

The ♔g5 invasion would be very strong. Note how in the last few moves, by just shuffling the pieces around, White has managed to get exactly what he needed, because it's just too hard to keep defending accurately.

65...♔b7 66.♖e8 ♗f7 67.♖e4 ♗d5 68.♖e3 ♗f7 69.♔g5 ♔a6 70.♖e7



Black resigned.

Note how Black repeatedly had many options that looked like they could be improvements. Yet they were all a bit worse for him. You should never worry about giving your opponent such options. With hindsight, it might be easy to point out the best defensive strategy, but during a game, trying to decide which worse position to choose to defend is a big headache for the defender.

Conclusion

Try to visualize the ideal positions of your pieces – particularly your bishop.

■ In the middle game, particularly with an initiative, the OCB can be a crucial attacking piece because your opponent cannot challenge it.

■ In ♖+♗ endgames, the crucial thing is not to give up because there are opposite-coloured bishops. There are countless situations that look close to equal, but on closer inspection contain ideas to keep pressing.

■ If you are just slightly better, it might seem as if your opponent has a lot of defensive options. Don't let this make you rush things. Your opponent may have many defensive options, but as long as they are all a bit worse, it won't be easy for him to choose one. And invariably, defending is a lot harder. ■

BILBAO

World Champion brilliant in Bilbao

Magnus makes all the difference

MARIA EMELIANOVA

The 9th Chess Masters Final ended in an undisputed triumph for Magnus Carlsen. Rallying after a first-round loss, the World Champion showed his best chess in months and won more games than all the other players combined. **DIRK JAN TEN GEUZENDAM** reports from Bilbao, where two streaks came to an end: Hikaru Nakamura finally beat Carlsen, who in his turn finally beat Anish Giri.

A satisfied Magnus Carlsen (with his third txapela) poses for his family while his sister Ingrid takes a selfie (just kidding).

The clock shows a couple of minutes past three p.m., the time the last round of the Bilbao Masters is supposed to start, an hour earlier than the previous rounds. The Teatro Campos Elíseos, an atmospheric modernist theatre that first opened its doors in 1902, is humming in anticipation of the first moves of the final games. Wesley So is looking around. All the players are seated at their tables. Only the seat opposite him, the seat waiting for Magnus Carlsen, is still vacant. So's eyes search for the arbiter, and when they find him, he shouts at him and tells him the time, stressing his words by tapping on his watch. Some of the other players laugh. They enjoy the American's rebellion against the World Champion's compulsive habit to be late. If there is a zero tolerance rule, why would all of them try to adhere to it while one player systemically ignores it and does as he pleases – without any consequences?

As Carlsen comes running to the table, it is Andoni Madariaga, one of the main movers of the chess tournaments in Bilbao, who comes to the rescue. He addresses the players and the audience, refers to the terror-

ist attack in Munich the day before and asks everyone to stand up and observe a minute's silence. And then the games begin.

It's not the first time Wesley So has asked an arbiter to start the round and not wait for Carlsen. I saw him do it last year at the Sinquefield Cup in St. Louis, and this year at the Grand Chess Tour leg in Leuven as well. His annoyance is understandable, but so is the organizer's leniency towards their top player. Carlsen is not only the best player in the world, he is also always spoiling for a fight and basically wants to win every game. When push comes to shove, more often than not you can count on the Norwegian, something that cannot be said of all his colleagues. At the end of the day, seven of the 30 games of this ninth Bilbao Masters were decided. With one loss and four wins, Carlsen was involved in five of them. It's no exaggeration to conclude that without him it would have been a pretty drab and dull affair.

Even a sensational loss in the first round, against Hikaru Nakamura of all people, didn't throw him off balance. Instead, he rallied and, exploiting the accelerating nature of the Bilbao scoring system (three points for a win) to the full, he won his next three games, essentially deciding the tournament before the halfway point.

But does that excuse the prima donna attitude that he is so prone to? Most fans couldn't probably care less. They see far more outrageous behaviour in other sports and perhaps they even expect him to be not compliant. They surely would have loved to see his outburst after his second-round game against Wei Yi. Carlsen won that game, but he was so upset that he had given the young Chinese star a chance to crawl back into the game that he first threw his jacket to the floor and then his pen.

They would probably also have relished his foul mood in some of the press conferences, particularly after he failed to win his fourth game on the trot in Round 5 – against Anish Giri, whom he wanted to beat so badly. Having outplayed the Dutchman with Black, he saw a continuation that his opponent also believed was winning, but once they went for the line they had seen, White turned out to have a miraculous way out. At the press conference with Leontxo Garcia, Carlsen tried to restrict himself to a short analysis of what had happened in the game and was certainly not waiting for the additional daily question 'from the social media', which this time asked him to describe his style. When he was asked the question, he looked as if he could not believe his ears, laughed to indicate that he thought the question ridiculous and then told Garcia that he'd happily tell him about his style next time, but not now. The situation didn't improve when the interviewer fired off a last question before letting him go: 'How do you say "Thank you" in Norwegian?' Carlsen indicated that he had no idea, got up and left, leaving Garcia annoyed about his lack of cooperation.

'Carlsen won that game, but he was so upset that he had given the young Chinese star a chance to crawl back into the game that he first threw his jacket to the floor and then his pen.'

This was not really fair, since it was quite a stretch to go from an emotionally charged game to a random question that could be asked at any time. It wasn't their only 'conversation' that was fun to watch. Before the tournament, there was a press conference at which both Carlsen and Karjakin were interviewed about the upcoming World Championship match. Garcia asked them how they relaxed during their preparation. Karjakin said he spent time with his wife and their new-born son. Carlsen thought for a second and then said: 'I go here, that's what I do. And I reply in a very poor way to your questions, which is a very good way to take your mind of chess', leaving more than one person speechless.

The reply also confused Anish Giri, who was sitting next to Karjakin, as he tweeted that Carlsen had said: 'I grow hair.' That was not quite what he said, but Giri's version betrayed a good insight into the Champ's special sense of humour.

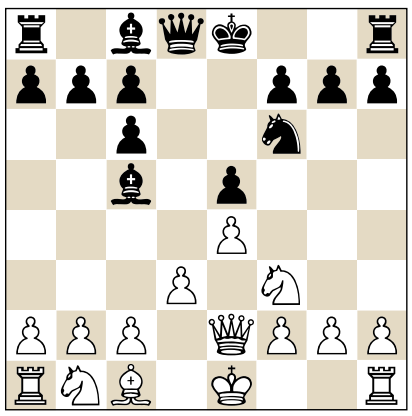
Carlsen made up for his grumpy moments at the final press conference, where he explained that his perfectionism often prevented him from simple happiness, and that his lack of enthusiasm the previous day, when it was already clear that he had won the tournament, was because of tiredness and a cold. And showing his sense of humour again he added: 'And I know there's nothing more annoying than someone who wins and still complains, and I am trying to improve but I still have a way to go.'

And of course he was happy – not only with the result but, even more importantly, with the level and quality of his play. So happy that he agreed to annotate one of his games, his fine win against Wesley So in Round 4.

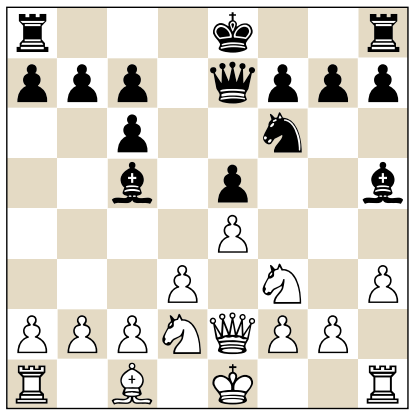
NOTES BY
Magnus Carlsen

RL 7.1 – C65
Magnus Carlsen
Wesley So
Bilbao 2016 (4)

1.e4 e5
This was Round 4 and already my third white game. In the first two games, against predominantly 1...e5 players, I was surprised by 1...c5 and wheeled out a couple of obscure anti-Sicilians. I got an excellent position against Nakamura and then nothing against Karjakin, but still won, so naturally I was expecting to be surprised again.
2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6
Wesley also plays other systems, but an invitation to the Berlin is never a surprise from a top player.
4.d3 In my early years as an ambitious player, the Berlin was not considered a particularly good opening, so I used to grab the invitation with both hands, with excellent results. More recently, however, more solid systems for Black have been found, and I'm finding myself rejecting the invitation on a regular basis.
4...♗c5 5.♗xc6 dxc6 6.♕e2
Back in 2012, I started playing 6.♘bd2 here, and to my surprise it became very popular. The text has similar ideas, but it is much less well-known.

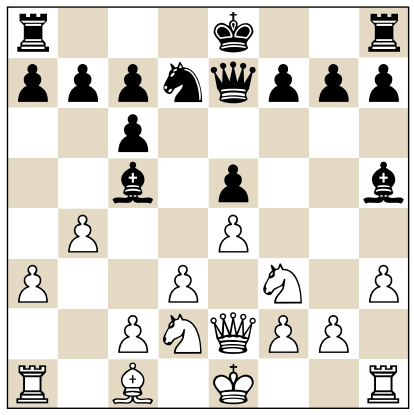


6...♕e7 7.♘bd2 ♗g4
Naturally, there are plenty of other options on this and the previous move, but this plan is always decent. The bishop will temporarily be misplaced on h5/g6, but it will usually come into play via f7 after ...♘d7 and ...f6.
8.h3 ♗h5



9.a3
This move took me more than 20 minutes, but I felt it was already time to delve more deeply into the position. In the 2013 World Championship, Vishy chose the plan with ♘f1-g3 without g4, but that was without ♕e2 and ...♕e7. Now I would just be a tempo down, compared to that game.
If 9.♘f1 ♘d7 10.♘g3 ♗xf3 11.♕xf3 g6 White has wasted a tempo.
Other ways to play were 9.♘c4 or 9.g4, followed by ♘f1-g3, but neither of them seemed to give too much of a basis for an interesting battle.
Bothering his bishop immediately, though, seemed much more interesting. Besides, I won't hide the fact that playing h3 and a3 on consecutive moves in the opening gave me pleasure.
9...♘d7
An alternative was 9...a5. Generally this move is desirable strategically, gaining space while preventing b4. However, with the bishop on h5, kingside castling is not attractive, with g4 coming and a knight landing on f5, while with the pawn on a5, queenside castling will not be on the cards. Having said that, it was certainly a playable option, and probably the most challenging one.
10.b4

'Besides, I won't hide the fact that playing h3 and a3 on consecutive moves in the opening gave me pleasure.'

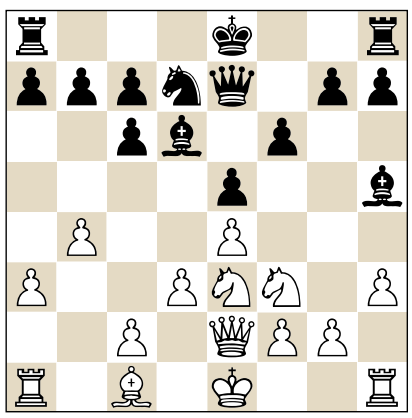


10...♗d6
Wesley spent almost 20 minutes on this move, which is quite understandable, as all three bishop moves were serious options.
A very solid option was 10...♗d4, getting rid of the dark-squared bishop, which otherwise either risks being harassed on b6, or passive on d6: 11.♖b1 ♗c3 12.0-0 ♗xd2 (otherwise the knight escapes) 13.♗xd2. But I was not too unhappy about this, as the extra space on the queenside feels useful.
The engines like 10...♗b6, and I don't have any convincing arguments against it. The worry for Black is that the bishop is likely to be caged in on b6 after a subsequent c4-c5, which an engine probably won't mind. Recent examples from a couple of blitz and rapid games by Nakamura (against MVL and Caruana respectively) in another line of the Berlin, suggest that even in top-level practice the computer's opinion may prevail.
11.♘c4 f6
11...♘f8 was possible, but I suspect he

was worried about 12.♘a5, and there is no convenient way to protect b7.

12.♘e3

A key point of the a3/b4 operation is that the e3-square is freed up for the knight (otherwise the bishop would happily have chopped it off). The knight can later jump to f5 without having to play g4 first.

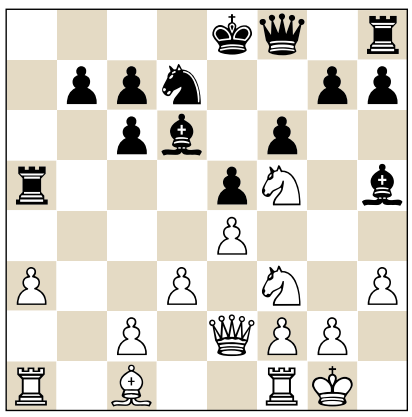


12...a5? As on move 9, this is the most challenging, but certainly not the most practical option, which is why I'm assigning it a question mark, not because of its objective value. 12...♘f8 13.♘f5 ♕d7 was very solid: with the knight coming to e6, Black is alright.

13.♘f5 ♕f8 The consistent follow-up, since he forces me to make a concession on the queenside. However, now his king will be stuck in the centre for a while, which is especially unpleasant considering the shorter time-control used in Bilbao.

13...♕f7 14.♖b1 (now I don't have to take) 14...axb4 15.axb4 0-0 16.0-0 (16.♗h6 ♕a2!), and while he has been able to seize the a-file for the moment, his other pieces are rather more clumsily placed than in the note to 12... ♘f8.

14.bxa5 ♖xa5 15.0-0



MARIA EMELIANOVA

No need for a car. Magnus Carlsen preferred to walk from the players' hotel to the Teatro Campos Elíseos in the company of his father Henrik or his sister Ingrid.

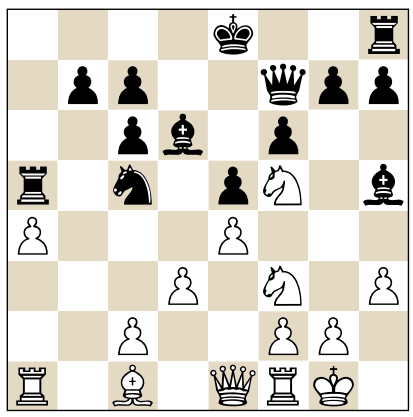
15...♕f7

This wasted tempo certainly doesn't look impressive, but at least he frees up the f8-square for the knight or even the bishop. Castling, however, won't be possible for a long time because of the little trick ♗h6, which really is the key to the position.

Perhaps he should have tried 15...♔d8, to evacuate the king to the queenside: 16.a4 (or 16.♗d2 ♖a4) 16...♗b4, and in both cases it's not so easy to generate a serious initiative on the queenside.

16.a4 ♘c5 17.♕e1

17.♗d2 was also good, but this move, freeing up the knight and attacking the rook, just felt too natural not to be played.

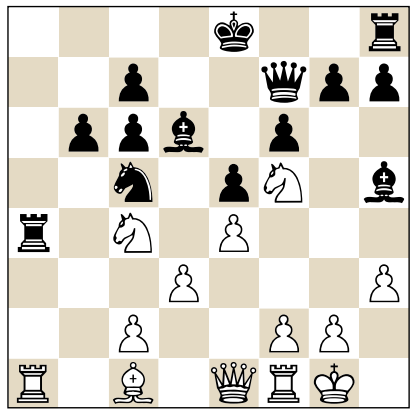


17...b6

It's becoming harder and harder to defend. After 17...♖a8, the knight goes in the other direction, since the rook will not be attacked after ♘c4: 18.♘3h4 ♘e6 (18...♗f8 19.a5, fixing b7 as a target, 19...g5 20.♘f3 ♗xf3 21.gxf3, and White is firmly in the driver's seat) 19.♖b1, and it's hard for Black to avoid losing a pawn, since ♘xd6, followed by ♘f5, is looming as well.

18.♘d2 ♖xa4 19.♘c4

This is the idea. Every move comes with a threat.

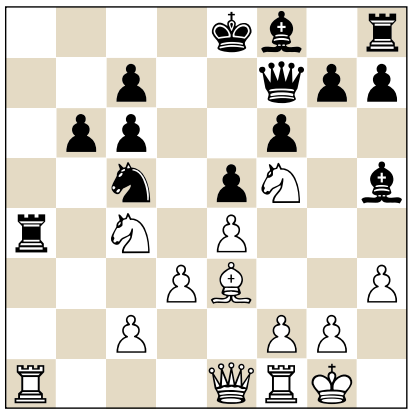


19...♗f8?!

I suspected that 19...♗e7 might be better than the text, as it does not

block the h8-rook. I was not too worried, though, since I saw I had at least a forced draw: 20.♗e3 ♔d7 (the only move, since 20...0-0 21.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 22.♗xc5 loses a piece) 21.♘xb6+ (21.♖xa4 ♘xa4 22.f4 is probably what I would have done. White has a nice initiative and is not risking anything, but Black is hanging on for the moment) 21...cxb6 22.♗xc5 ♖xa1 23.♕xa1 ♗xc5 24.♕a7+ ♔e6 25.♘xg7+ ♔d6 26.♘f5+ ♔e6.

20.♗e3

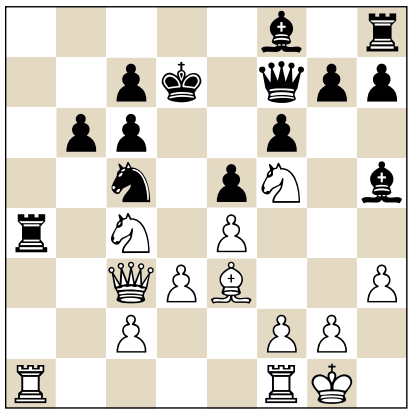


20...♔d7

20...♖g8 was the only move, which I had seen: 21.f4. But it's still impossible to defend, at least in practical play.

21.♕c3

All these are natural moves, and by now I felt I was winning. There is very little to be done about the threat of ♘xb6, followed by ♗xc5, when a white rook will land on a7, winning the queen and the game.



21...♘xe4

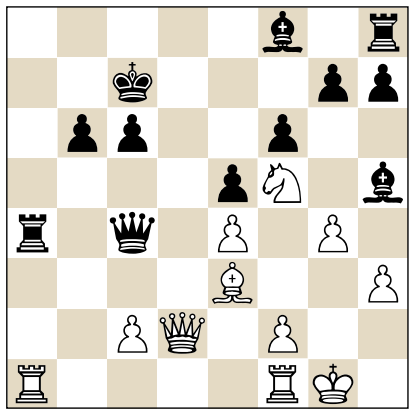
I thought 21...♖xc4 was the last chance, but after 22.dxc4 ♘xe4 23.♕d3+ ♘d6 24.g4 ♗g6 25.♖fd1 Black is tied up, while ♗xb6 and ♖a7 are being threatened.

22.♘xb6+

Again opening up the seventh rank and leaving the black king completely naked.

22...cxb6 23.dxe4 ♕c4 24.♕d2+ ♔c7 25.g4

Finally g4! Much later than expected, but much more powerful.



25...♗g6 26.♖fd1

I had no wish to calculate 26.♗xb6+ here or on the previous move, as this forces immediate resignation.

A fun game, which put me in a great mood (which was immediately ruined by failing to win the next game against Anish, but that's another story).

■ ■ ■

This was Carlsen's third victory in Bilbao, but his performance was much more convincing than in 2011 and 2012, when he needed blitz playoffs against Ivanchuk (1½-½) and Caruana (2-0). He likes Bilbao, and so does his family. On this occasion, his parents and his sisters Ingrid and Signe came along and they all had a great time. Magnus always declined to be taken to the Teatro Campos Elíseos by car and instead walked there with Ingrid or his father Henrik.

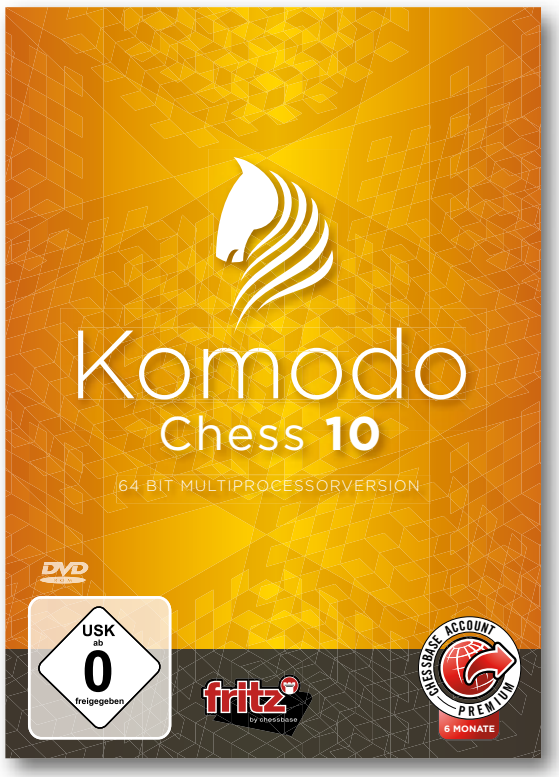
Although it's a prestigious event, the Bilbao tournament is also a relaxed get-together where the organizers hope everyone will feel at home. The official title is Chess Masters Final, but these days it's no longer the final of anything. Originally, Bilbao had been planned to be the culmination of the Grand Slam, a cycle of tournaments that, over the years, has included Linares, Wijk aan Zee, Sofia and Nanjing. At the end of the year, the winners of the Grand Slam events were to come to the Basque city for a grand finale. These ambitious plans were never effectuated fully, but they did lead to a series of wonderful tournaments. The Grand Slam Association gradually ceased to exist and was eventually disbanded, and now the city of Bilbao is simply proud to stage an annual elite tournament.

'One of the players couldn't believe his eyes when he ran into the coach of one of his colleagues who was checking his phone in the corridor to the toilets.'

Although there were no incidents or suspicions of any kind, the atmosphere in the playing hall was possibly too relaxed, even. The spectators did not have to hand in their mobile phones, and many of them followed the games with their chess engines running. And one of the players couldn't believe his eyes when he ran into the coach of one of his colleagues who was checking his phone in the corridor to the toilets.

As a special attraction, Hikaru Nakamura and Wesley So agreed to play with a watch that registered their heartbeats. For the audience it was interesting to see that a quiet posture does not necessarily mean a low pulse, but So limited the experiment to just one game. He had been promised that his heart rate would be invisible to his opponent, and when he discovered that this was not the case, he understandably lost interest.

Komodo Chess 10



Komodo Chess 10*

The new number one has arrived! Thanks to a host of extensive improvements and fine tweaking, the latest version of Komodo has again gained over 60 Elo points on its predecessor. The changes cover several areas: the evaluation function has been significantly sharpened, particularly with respect to king safety and endgame positions, and the search algorithm has been improved and optimized to run on multiple processors. Komodo 10 is also better at managing its time, and just generally calculates faster.

The result is an unbeatable combination - the strongest chess engine ever running on the best and most popular user interface around. As it comes with the Fritz 15 GUI, Komodo, as well as chess prowess, offers all the training and playing functions you know from Fritz, including direct access to the ChessBase Web Apps such as Live Database, the ChessBase video portal, our tactics server and more!

Komodo's intelligent and results-driven evaluations have also proven extremely effective in practice and are reflected in the engine's playing style. If Komodo 10 considers its position to be advantageous, it avoids exchanges and seeks to open the position, but when defending a worse position, it strives to exchange pieces and block the position, in an attempt to push the game towards a draw.

It also recently demonstrated its exceptional playing strength in a series of matches against grandmasters, including the current world #6, Hikaru Nakamura. Komodo remained unbeaten in over 50 games in which it gave its human opponents a material advantage or several free moves (with the exception of only a few games in which the handicap consisted of two important pawns or the f7 pawn and three free moves) - Komodo even beat Nakamura 2.5 to 1.5!

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Komodo Chess 10 comes with:

- New 64-bit multi-processor engine
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System requirements:
Minimum: Pentium III 1 GHz, 2 GB AM, Windows XP (Service Pack 3), 7/8, DirectX9, graphics card with 256 MB RAM, DVD-ROM drive, Windows Media Player 9 and internet access for program activation. Playchess.com access, Let's Check and updates.

Recommended: PC Intel i5 (Quadcore), 4 GB RAM, Windows 8.1/10, DirectX10, graphics card with 512 MB RAM or more, 100% DirectX10- compatible sound card, Windows Media Player 11, DVD ROM drive and internet access for program activation, Let's Check, ChessBase Live Database, Engine Cloud, Tactics Training and updates.

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The 9th Bilbao Masters was a historical event for various reasons. To begin with, the tournament started with a bang when Nakamura finally beat Magnus Carlsen for the first time in a classical game. Trailing the World Champion 0-12, draws not counting, the American must have been over the moon that the spell was finally broken. With admirable composure he called it 'not such a big thing' and said it would have meant more to him some years ago. Perhaps, but we wouldn't blame him if he was jumping, punching the air and kissing the ground for joy inside because this ordeal was finally over.

And Magnus Carlsen finally beat Anish Giri after one loss and a long series of draws. For computer worshippers that are more interested in engine assessments than chess it was not a flawless game; it even contained 'blunders', as they call it, but for the real chess fan it was a fantastic fight in which Carlsen took risks, put pressure on his opponent and scored a fully deserved win.

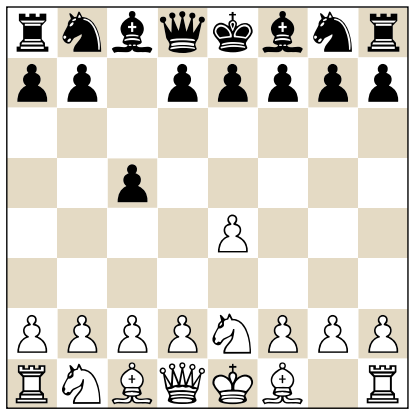
Both these historical wins have been annotated by Ruslan Ponomariov, Bilbao's strongest chess-playing citizen and one of the commentators.

NOTES BY
Ruslan Ponomariov

SI 48.10 – B20
Magnus Carlsen
Hikaru Nakamura
Bilbao 2016 (1)

This game was played in the first round. Before this the two players had met numerous times, but Hikaru had not managed to win even a single game at the classical time rate (and lost 12). Moreover, with the black pieces his score was altogether depressing: 9 losses with 7 draws. In general, Magnus arrived for this game as the clear favourite.

1.e4 c5 2.♘e2!?



An interesting choice, fully in Magnus's style. Previously he had played this only in blitz. Objectively, however, I think that this move does not give White any advantage and often things transpose into normal variations of the Sicilian Defence.

2...d6

All the same Hikaru aims for his favourite Najdorf Variation, against which a move order such as 2.♘e2 is particularly aimed.

In the event of 2...♘c6 White normally plays 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4, when the Najdorf Variation is no longer possible. Theory considers that Black can solve his opening problems with 2...♘f6 3.♘bc3 d5! 4.exd5 ♘xd5 5.♘xd5 ♕xd5 6.d4 e5 7.♘c3 (7.dxe5 ♕xe5 shows the drawback to 2.♘e2 – the white knight is not very well placed and it merely hinders the development of its own pieces) 7...♕xd4 8.♗e3 ♕xd1+ 9.♖xd1 ♗e6, when White's good development gives him sufficient compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but not more.

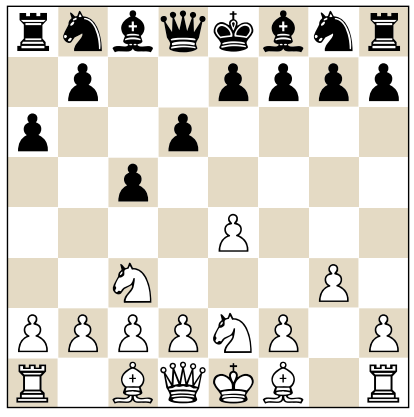
3.♘bc3

White had another interesting alternative in 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♗g2 g6 5.0-0 ♗g7 6.c3 0-0 7.d4, occupying the centre with his pawns, which should promise him some advantage. Magnus had already played this in 2009 against Sergey Karjakin – as Black!

3...a6

In the event of 3...♘f6 there would obviously have followed 4.g3 (4.d4 cxd4 5.♘xd4 a6 is a normal Najdorf Variation) 4...g6 5.♗g2 ♗g7 6.0-0 0-0 7.d3 ♘c6, the Closed Variation of the Sicilian Defence, which is perfectly acceptable for Black. But not everyone likes the fact that with this move order Black cannot develop his knight more harmoniously at e7, behind his pawns.

4.g3



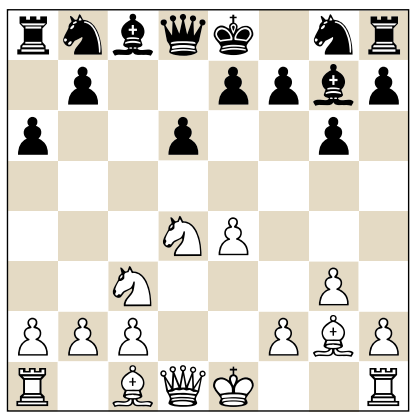
4...g6?!

Since 3...a6 was played on the previous move, it was more logical for Black to make use of this and continue his plan of development with 4...b5 5.♗g2 ♗b7. Now normal variations of the Sicilian Defence arise, where the move ...a7-a6 will look rather slow.

5.♗g2 ♗g7 6.d4

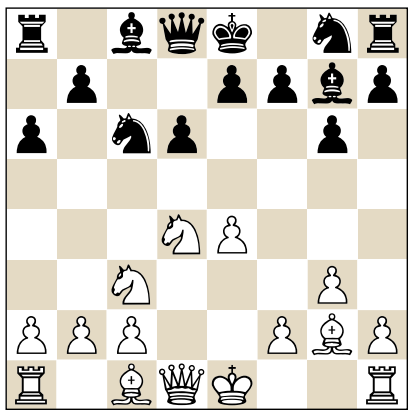
As a result White transposes into the Dragon Variation, where ...a7-a6 is by no means the most necessary move. It also looked promising to play in the style of the Closed Variation: 6.0-0 ♘c6 7.d3 e6 8.♗e3 ♘d4 9.♕d2 ♘e7 10.♘d1 0-0 11.♘c1 e5 12.c3 ♘dc6 13.♗h6, but in open positions it is probably easier for White to emphasize the slowness of Black's development.

6...cxd4 7.♘xd4



7...♘f6

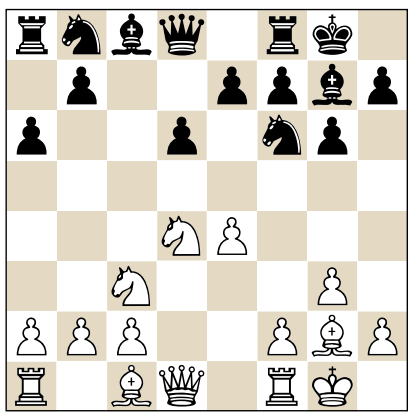
A somewhat unsophisticated move. In search of counterplay it would be interesting to try 7...♘c6 while the bishop on g7 is not yet blocked, for example:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) 8.♘de2 ♘f6 9.0-0 ♗d7 10.h3 b5;
B) 8.♗e3 ♘e5!? 9.♕e2 ♘g4 10.0-0-0 ♘xe3 11.♕xe3 ♘f6 12.f4 ♕c7 13.e5 dxe5 14.fxe5 ♘g4 15.♘d5 ♕a5 16.♕b3 ♘xe5, with unclear play;
C) 8.♘xc6 bxc6 9.0-0 ♕c7!? 10.♖e1 (10.♕d3 ♘f6 11.b3 ♘d7 12.♗b2 0-0) 10...♖b8, and compared with the game Black would appear to have more options.

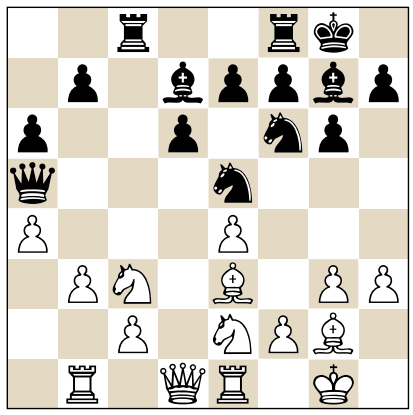
8.0-0 0-0



9.b3 Rather a rare move.

'Magnus was obviously carried away by the idea of punishing the black queen, which has overstepped the mark. The psychological trick worked!'

Usually in this position they play 9.h3, taking control of the g4-square, so that neither the black bishop nor the black knight can go there.
In this position I myself played 9.♖e1 ♗g4 10.♘de2 ♘c6 11.h3 ♗d7?! (11...♗xe2 12.♖xe2 ♖c8 13.♘d5 would appear to be more accurate) 12.a4 ♖c8 13.♗e3 ♘e5 14.♗d4 ♘c6 15.♗e3 ♘e5 16.b3! ♕a5 17.♖b1



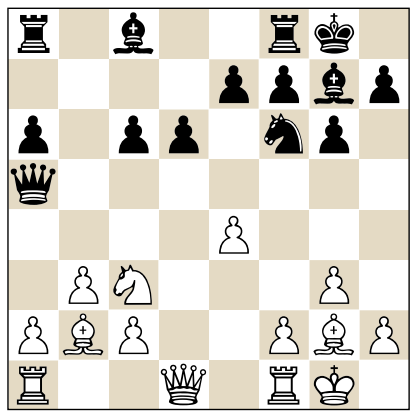
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

when Black has problems finding squares for all his pieces. The active 17...b5 merely led to the creation of weaknesses in Black's position: 18.axb5 ♗xb5 19.♖a1 ♕c7 20.♘xb5 axb5 21.♘d4 ♘fd7, Ponomariov-Wang Hao, Tashkent 2012. And here the simple 22.♖a2 b4 23.♕d2 ♕c3 24.♕xc3 ♖xc3 25.♘b5 ♖cc8 26.f4 ♘c6 27.♖d1 would have given White a clear advantage.

9...♘c6

On 9...♗g4 White plays 10.♕d2.

10.♘xc6 bxc6 11.♗b2 ♕a5!?

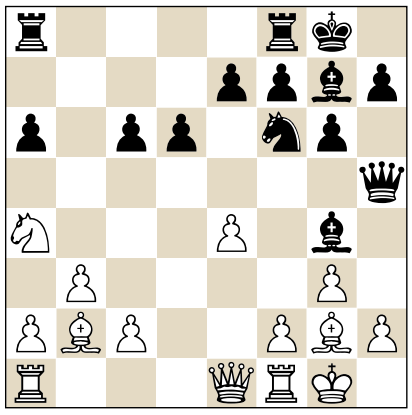


An interesting moment in the game. The opening phase has gone in White's favour.
After the quiet continuation 11...♘d7 12.♕d2 a5 13.♘a4 ♗xb2 14.♘xb2 f6 15.f4 ♗a6 16.♖f2 White retains a small but stable advantage. Black's active possibilities here are rather limited. The move made by Nakamura is objectively not the best, and it could have created greater problems for Black. But in this way, in my view, he changed the course of the game, giving Magnus the possibility of making a mistake. In some way this queen manoeuvre reminded me of the famous game Tarrasch-Lasker,

1908, where Lasker also undertook a rather risky manoeuvre with his rook along the 5th rank, in order to disrupt the quiet course of the game.

12.♘a4 ♗g4 13.♕e1 ♕h5

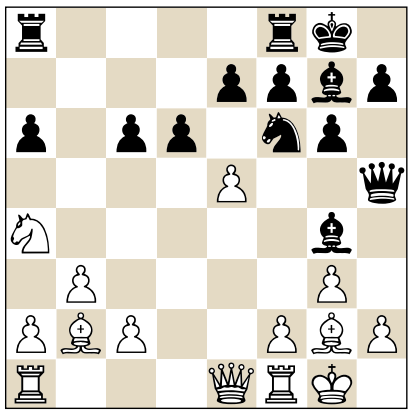
13...♕xe1 14.♖fxe1 ♘d7 15.f4 was objectively better, but who wants to play a slightly inferior endgame against Carlsen?



14.f3?!

Magnus was obviously carried away by the idea of punishing the black queen, which has overstepped the mark. The psychological trick worked!

If instead of this he had played the more pragmatic 14.e5! Black would have had great problems:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) It is obvious that in this version the transition into an endgame after 14...dxe5 15.♕xe5 is even worse for Black;

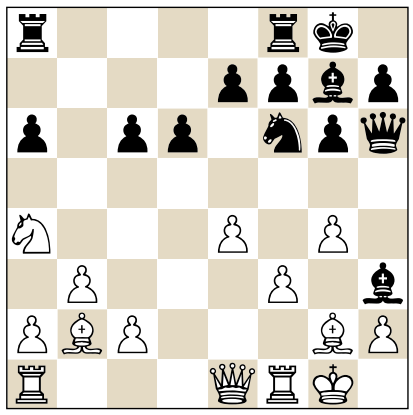
B) In the event of 14...♘d7 White would have had to calculate some precise, but not the most complicated variations: 15.exd6 ♗xb2 16.dxe7 ♖fe8 17.♘xb2 ♗e2 18.♗xc6 ♖a7 19.♕c3! (it is important to take control of the e5-square) 19...♗xf1 20.♕d4!, when White regains the rook, remaining with his extra pawns (20...♖c7 21.♗xd7 ♖xe7 22.♗g4);

C) There only remains 14...♘e8 15.exd6 (15.f4!?, but not 15.♗xc6?! ♖c8, with counterplay) 15...exd6 16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.♕c3+ ♘f6 18.♖fe1 with rather easy play for White.

14...♗h3 15.g4

Pawns, as is well known, cannot move backwards. 15.♖d1 was steadier, but White follows his plan prepared beforehand.

15...♕h6



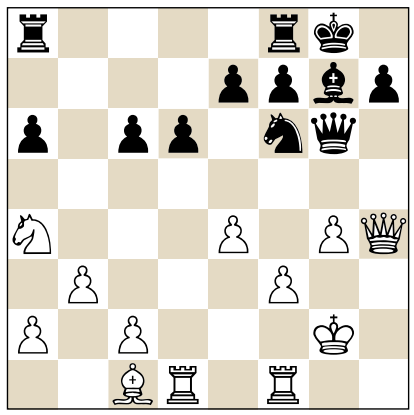
16.♖d1

It was possible to win a pawn by 16.♗c1 g5 17.♗xg5 (17.♗xh3 ♕xh3 18.♗xg5 ♘xg4!) 17...♕xg5 18.♗xh3 ♘h5!, but Black would be only too glad to obtain in return such fine play on the dark squares.

16...g5 17.♗c1 ♗xg2 18.♔xg2 ♕g6 19.h4

Again 19.c4 h5 20.h3 was more cautious, restricting Black's active possibilities.

19...gxh4 20.♕xh4



20...d5!

A surprise, unexpectedly exploiting the remoteness of the white knight on a4 from the centre of events, Black suddenly initiates active counterplay.

21.g5?

This would appear to be a blunder. The computer recommends 21.exd5 cxd5 22.c3, assessing the resulting position as equal. But from the human point of view this looks like

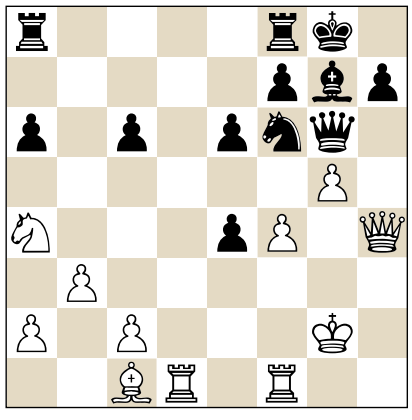
DAVID LLADA

Magnus Carlsen and Hikaru Nakamura exchange a couple of lines after the American has ended a dramatic string of losses and scored his first victory against the World Champion.

a kind of psychological capitulation. The knight at a4 stands on the edge of the board and Black has a pawn centre.

To justify his preceding play I think that White should have played 21.e5 ♘d7 22.f4 ♕xc2+ 23.♖d2 ♕e4+ 24.♔g1. Yes, he is a pawn down, but he still has prospects of an attack on the kingside, and the black queen is not very securely placed.

21...dxe4 22.f4 e6!



Defending against 23.f5. It becomes unclear what White can do next. His pieces are poorly coordinated, his king is exposed, and he is a pawn down... Of course, a certain accuracy is required of Black in the conversion of his advantage, but it can be said that the game is already decided.

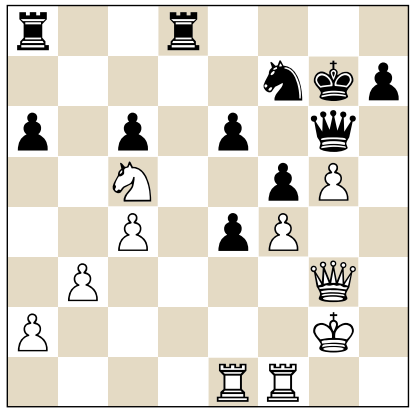
23.c4

Or 23.♘c5 ♖fd8 24.♖de1 ♗f8.

23...♖fd8 24.♖de1

A positional concession – White voluntarily gives up the open file. But also after 24.♕g3 ♘h5 25.♕f2 f5 Black's advantage is unquestioned.

24...♘e8 25.♘c5 ♘d6 26.♕f2 f5 27.♗b2 ♘f7 28.♗xg7 ♔xg7 29.♕g3



29...♖d6

Safely played. 29...e5 was also possible, but Black has absolutely no need to hurry.

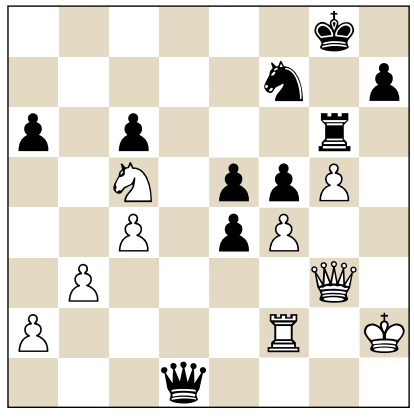
30.♖d1 ♖ad8 31.♖xd6 ♖xd6 32.♕c3+ ♔g8 33.♖f2

Of course, 33.♘xa6 was not possible on account of 33...♖d3.

33...♕h5 34.♕h3 ♕d1 35.♕e3 e5 36.♕g3

If 36.fxe5, 36...♖g6 37.♖xf5 ♕g4+.

36...♖g6 37.♔h2



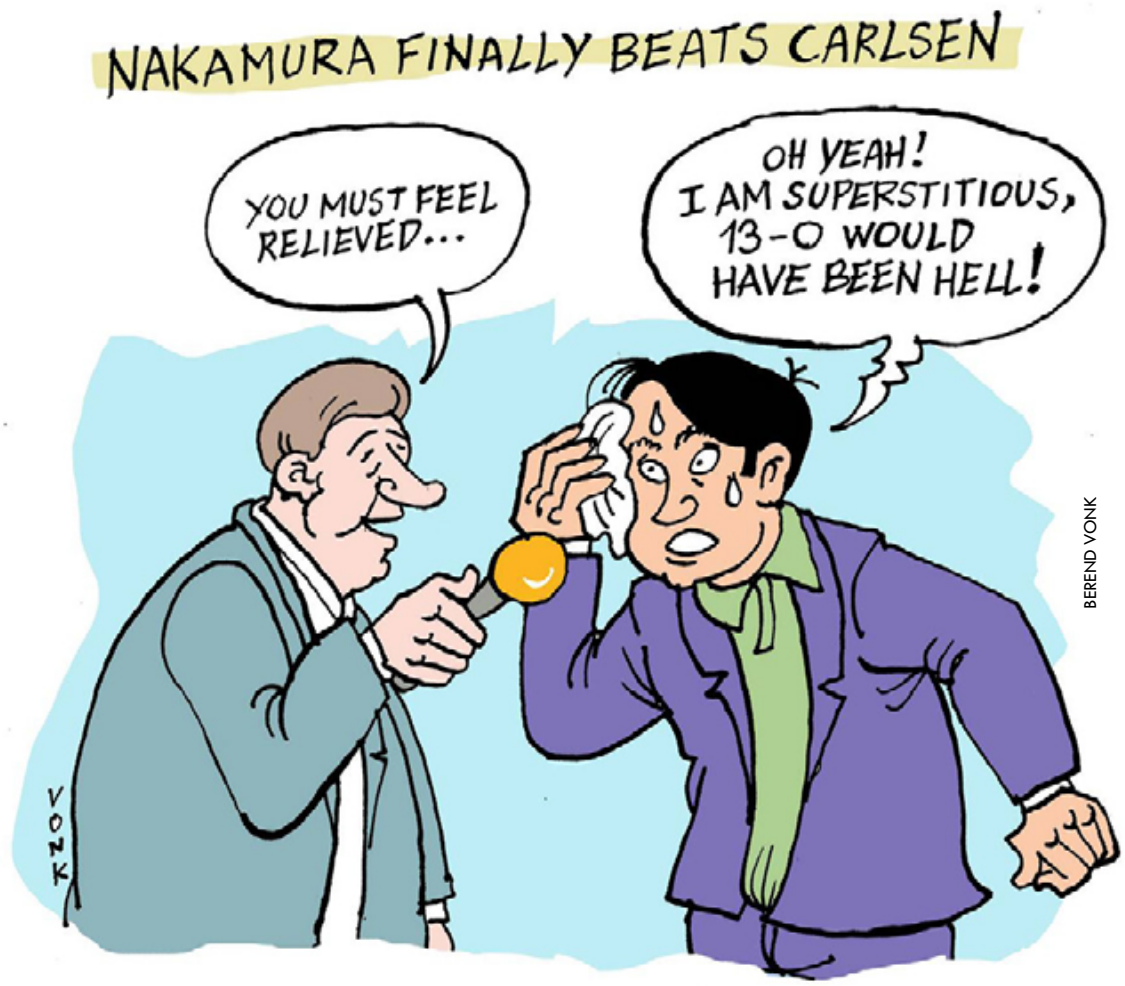
37...exf4

37...♕d4 followed by ...e4-e3 would have won immediately, but obviously in time-trouble Black decided first to make the 40 moves and then calmly work everything out.

38.♕xf4 ♕h5+ 39.♔g1 ♕d1+ 40.♔h2 ♕h5+ 41.♔g1 ♘xg5 42.♕b8+ ♔g7 43.♕e5+ ♔h6 44.♕f4 ♕d1+ 45.♔h2 ♕d4 46.b4 ♔g7 47.♕c7+ ♔h8 48.♕c8+ ♖g8 49.♕xf5 ♘f3+ 50.♔h3 ♕d6 White resigned.

Thus Nakamura succeeded for the first time in his life in winning a classical game against Carlsen.

It was interesting to see the subsequent fate of the two players in the tournament. Usually a win against a direct rival, and with the black pieces, is a good launch pad for victory in a tournament. But despite this, Hikaru concentrated on safety. He was the only player not to lose a single game in the tournament, but he also did not win any more. To Magnus's credit, the defeat in this game merely angered him and after it he won three games in succession. The strong champion's character! Few are capable of this after a loss, and against strong young opponents.


NAKAMURA FINALLY BEATS CARLSEN
YOU MUST FEEL RELIEVED...
OH YEAH! I AM SUPERSTITIOUS, 13-0 WOULD HAVE BEEN HELL!
BEREND VONK
VONK

NOTES BY
Ruslan Ponomariov

QP 9.4 – D00
Magnus Carlsen
Anish Giri
Bilbao 2016 (9)

Before this game the two players were in different psychological states. For Anish the second half of the tournament had gone really badly. Time after time obtaining good positions on emerging from the opening, in the subsequent middlegame he would begin acting rather uncertainly, time after time making oversights.

Whereas, after his loss in the first round, Magnus had completely recovered and at the given moment he was confidently leading. It is quite possible that even two draws in the last two rounds would have guaranteed him sole first place.

Nevertheless, I think that for Carlsen, Giri is a special opponent. Anish was the only player whom Magnus had never beaten at the classical time-control. In their first meeting in 2011 he even lost. In the first half of the present tournament, when their game again ended in a draw, Carlsen was quite upset by the result. So in general, a serious battle was undoubtedly expected. If today Carlsen was unable to win with White against an opponent who was not in his best form, then when?

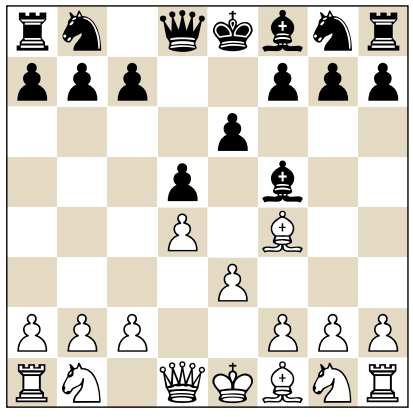
1.d4 d5 2.♗f4

A quiet choice of opening. Despite his poor score in the second half of the tournament, on the whole Giri had demonstrated good opening preparation. So it is understandable that Carlsen wanted to take the opponent out of his comfort zone as soon as possible using not the most well-studied set-up. White harmoniously completes his development without creating any weaknesses, and thanks to the right of the first move he is one move ahead in development. Of the drawbacks to this set-up, it can be mentioned that White does not create any particular difficulties for his opponent. Black can also calmly complete his development without any problems.

2...♗f5

How to play here with Black is a matter of taste. Emanuel Lasker, for example, recommended first developing the knights in the opening. But the move in the game also has its logic.

3.e3 e6



4.♗d3

Rather unpretentious. In some way these bishop manoeuvres resemble the Exchange Variation of the Slav Defence.

It is interesting that the following day Carlsen's future match opponent tried this set-up for White, only with the inclusion of the moves 4.♘f3 ♘f6 and here 5.c4 (rather than 5.♗d3). After 5...♗xb1 6.♖xb1 ♗b4+ 7.♔e2 dxc4 8.♕a4+ ♘c6 9.♘e5 ♘d5 10.♘xc6 ♕d7 in this rather quiet opening complications developed from the very first moves. They appeared to be in White's favour, but the game ended in a draw: 11.♖c1 bxc6 12.♖xc4 ♖b8 13.♕xc6 ♘xf4+ 14.exf4 ♗d6 15.b3 ♗xf4 16.♕xd7+ (16.g3!? ♗d6 17.♕a4±) 16...♔xd7 17.d5 ♗d6 18.dxe6+ ♔xe6 19.♖a4 ♔f6 20.♔f3 ♖b4 21.♖xb4 ♗xb4 22.♗d3 ♖d8 23.♔e2 ♖e8+ 24.♔f3 ♖d8 25.♔e2 ♖e8+ 26.♔f3 ♖d8 ½-½, Karjakin-Wei Yi, Bilbao 2016.

I should also like to mention that the immediate 4.c4 is probably in Black's favour. After 4...♗xb1 5.♖xb1 ♗b4+ 6.♔e2 dxc4 his knight can also be developed on e7, retaining a flexible pawn structure.

4...♗xd3 5.♕xd3 c6

A check on b5 was threatened. But 5...c5 looks more active, in order to subsequently develop the knight on c6. In the game Black in any case later played ...c6-c5 with a slight loss of time.

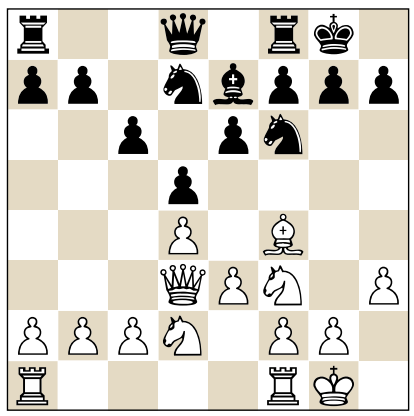
6.♘d2 ♘f6 7.♘gf3 ♗e7

After the symmetric 7...♗d6 there could have followed 8.♗g3. In general Black logically decided to retain his bishop, since before that he had arranged his pawns on squares of the opposite colour.

8.0-0 0-0 9.h3

An escape square for the king and prophylaxis in the event of ...♘h5.

9...♘bd7



The development of the pieces is now more or less complete. To play actively White needs to use his pawns. I was expecting either 10.e4 or 10.c4, but Carlsen chose a third path. Evidently he decided for the moment to refrain from forcing events in the centre, in order to avoid further simplification.

'If today Carlsen was unable to win with White against an opponent who was not in his best form, then when?'

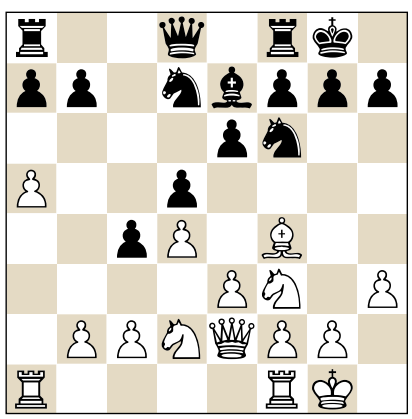
10.a4

With 10.a4 he tries to seize some space, and possibly restrict the black knight on d7. But for the moment this does not look especially dangerous for Black, as he himself has no fewer opportunities for play on the queenside.

10...c5 11.a5 c4

As a result Black himself seizes space on the queenside.

12.♕e2

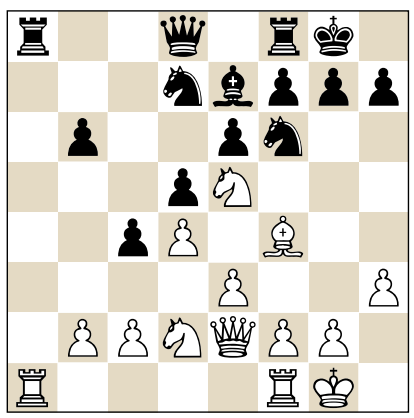


12...b5

It was not possible to win the breakaway white pawn on a5: 12...♗b4 13.a6 b5 14.c3 ♗e7 15.b3.

13.axb6 axb6 14.♘e5

Once again, when I was commenting live on this game, I was more expecting 14.e4, in order to somehow compensate for Black's activity on the queenside. True, Black can simply reply 14...dxe4 15.♘xe4 b5 when the position is roughly equal: both sides' pieces are well placed.

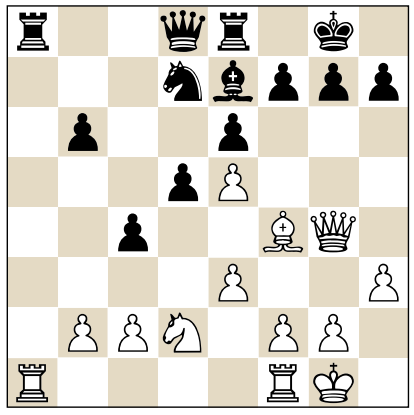


14...♘xe5

Not an essential exchange. Now White acquires at least some ideas of play on the kingside.

14...♕c8 followed by ...♕b7 was safer. I think that Black would always have time to exchange on e5.

15.dxe5 ♘d7 16.♕g4 ♖e8



17.h4!?

In the analysis after the game both players assessed the position as roughly equal and that White had nothing serious. At this point, in the words of Carlsen, he began playing rather recklessly. Possibly this last move is not altogether correct, but it began to work!

17...f5

For a human player it looks dangerous to grab the pawn: 17...♖xa1 18.♖xa1 ♗xh4 19.♗h6 g6 20.♘f3 ♗e7 21.♖a7 and in return the White pieces become far more active.

But Black could have coolly played 17...b5. In my view he has no fewer pieces in the defence of his kingside than White has in the attack. At any event, I have not been able to find anything for White. For example, 18.h5 ♗f8 19.♘f3 ♘c5 and if 20.♗g5 ♕c7 21.♗f6 h6. Potentially Black's play is superior to White's play on the kingside.

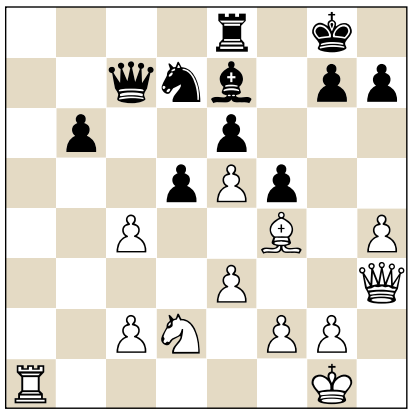
18.♕h3!

18.exf6?! ♗xf6 is harmless.

18...♖xa1 19.♖xa1 c3

Once again, by human standards, things are unclear after 19...♗xh4 20.♘f3 (or 20.g4 immediately) 20...♗e7 21.g4 – the initiative is on White's side.

20.bxc3 ♕c7 21.c4!



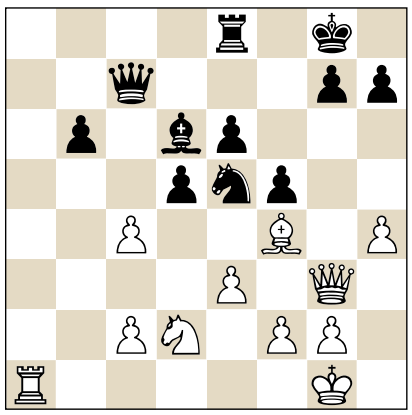
Further sharpening the position. The quiet phase of the game has concluded, and now accuracy in the calculation of variations is demanded of both players. But it is easier playing White.

21...♘xe5?

This creates a pin, leading to serious problems for Black.

It was better to play 21...dxc4 22.g4 (in the event of 22.♘f3?! ♘c5 23.♘d4 ♕d7 24.g4 fxg4 25.♕xg4 b5 26.♖b1 ♖b8, because of the prospect of creating a passed pawn on the queenside, it is now easier playing Black). Now 22...♘xe5 is possible (22...fxg4 23.♕xg4 ♕c6 24.♘f3 ♕d5): 23.gxf5 exf5 24.♕xf5 ♗f6, when the position is complicated, but Black is alright (25.♘e4 ♗xh4).

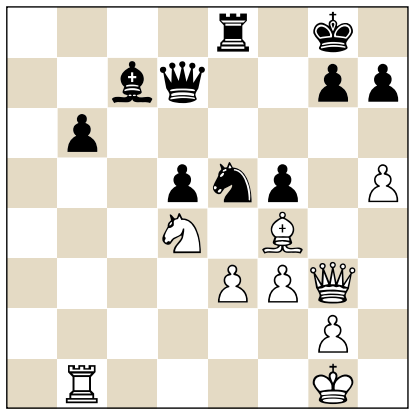
22.♕g3 ♗d6



23.cxd5?

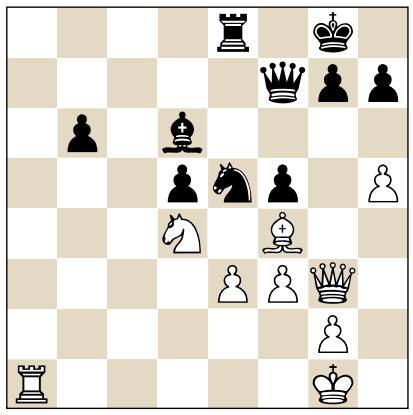
Here Magnus did not notice the little tactic 23.c5! bxc5 24.♖a6, after which White captures on d6, obtaining two pieces for a rook. With the queens on the board it is unlikely that Black has any chances of saving the game. Looking ahead, fortunately for Magnus he nevertheless managed to win the game. Otherwise it would have been difficult to imagine what an emotional reaction we would see from the World Champion at the end of the game.

23...exd5 24.♘b3 ♕xc2 25.♘d4 ♕c8 26.h5 ♕d7 27.♖b1 ♗c7 28.f3



Black is a pawn up, but with little time on the clock playing such a position is more difficult for him. He has to keep a constant eye on all of his pawns. I should remind you that the time-control for the tournament was not the most usual: one and a half hours for the first 40 moves, without any increment. So that time-troubles were by no means a rarity. The only thing in favour of Black's defence was that White had few pawns left, which constantly created drawing tendencies in an endgame.

28...♕f7 29.♖a1 ♗d6



30.♖a6

It is hard to say how many variations the two players saw at the board. Despite the fact that the computer assesses the position as roughly equal, Black's difficulties are demonstrated by the following variation:

Celeb 64

John Henderson

Pep Guardiola

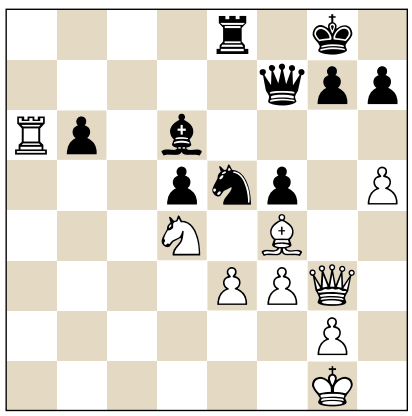
With the new English football season underway, Pep Guardiola takes the helm at Manchester City, and with José Mourinho now in charge at Manchester United, the media has taken to describe their long-time managerial rivalry to now become the 'Manchester Chess Match'.

And if there is going to be any chess involved, then my money is on Guardiola, who not only plays, but has likened the similarities between chess and football, even going as far as saying 'The process of picking a line-up is a bit like sitting in front of your chess pieces. You've no idea how similar the two things are.'

Footballing interviews tend to take a chess twist with Pep, as another Spanish journalist discovered of the former Barcelona manager. 'You didn't read the interview Leontxo García did with Magnus Carlsen in *El Pais* by any chance?,' he inquired of the writer. 'There was one thing Carlsen said that I loved. He said that it doesn't matter if he has to make some sacrifices at the start of the game, because he knows that he is at his strongest in the latter stages. It really got me thinking and I must learn how I can apply it to football.'

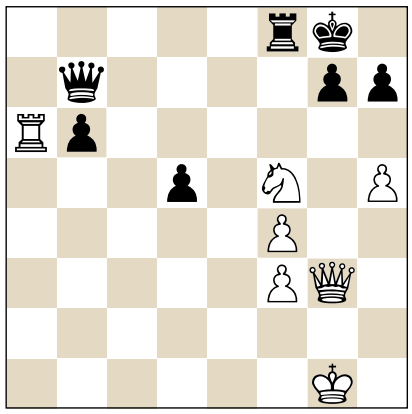
After Guardiola left Barcelona, he famously took a footballing sabbatical in New York and almost immediately found himself befriending Garry Kasparov. Through their friendship he tried to delve into his mind to see how Kasparov stayed at the top. ■

30.♘b5, and considerable accuracy is demanded of Black to find a series of only moves: 30...♗b8 31.♖a8 ♘xf3+! 32.♕xf3 ♗xf4 33.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 34.♕xd5+ (34.♕xf4 ♕xb5) 34...♔h8 35.exf4 ♕e1+ 36.♔h2 ♕h4+, with a draw by perpetual check.



30...♕xh5

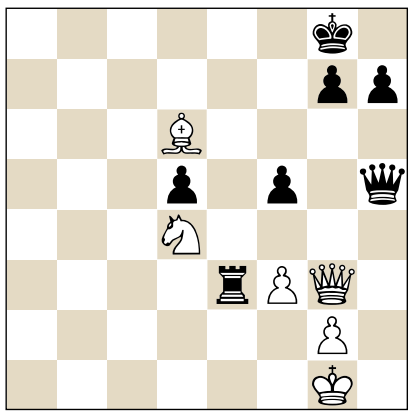
I would not be so bold as to condemn this move. The computer says that Black could have played 30...♕b7 31.♘xf5 ♘xf3+! 32.gxf3 ♗xf4 33.exf4 and now 33...♖f8!!.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

Would you have seen this at the board with little time on the clock?

31.♖xb6 ♘c4 32.♖xd6 ♘xd6 33.♗xd6 ♖xe3

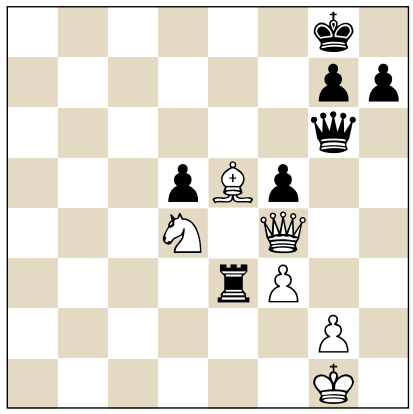


NEW IN CHESS

Struggling with his form Anish Giri collapsed in the second half, not only losing to Magnus Carlsen for the first time but also suffering defeats against Wei Yi and Wesley So.

Black has given up two pieces for a rook, but on the other hand he has eliminated another white pawn. But with the queens on White creates threats, as all his pieces are active.

34.♗e5 ♕g6 35.♕f4



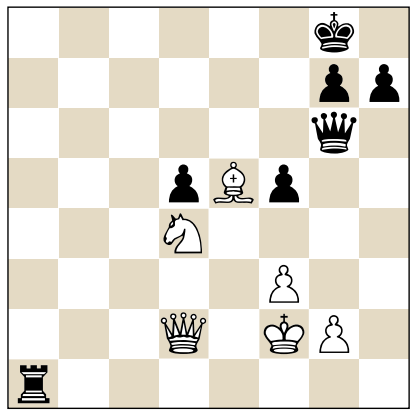
35...♖e1+

After 35...♕h6 36.♕xh6 gxh6 37.f4 Black exchanges the queens, but in so doing he is in danger of losing all his pawns. For example, 37...♔f7 38.♘xf5 ♖e1+ (38...♖xe5 39.fxe5 ♔e6 40.♘xh6 ♔xe5 41.g3, and mate in 36 moves according to the endgame tablebases!) 39.♔f2 ♖h1 40.♘e3.

36.♔f2 ♖a1 Fortunately for Black he finds this counterplay.

37.♕d2

After 37.♘xf5 ♖a2+ 38.♔e1 ♕e6 39.♔f1 h6! White cannot play 40.♘xg7 (40.♕g3 g5) because of 40...♕g6.



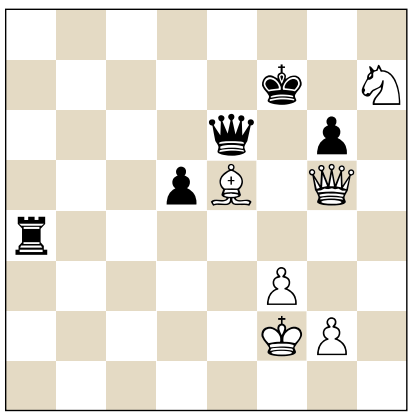
37...♖a8??

In time-trouble, with only a few moves left before the time-control, Anish nevertheless cracks under the pressure and commits a tactical oversight.

One can understand the desire to bring all the pieces close to the king on defended squares.

But Black should have played 37...♕a6 (38.♘xf5?? ♖a2 39.♗b2 ♕b7, and Black wins) or 37...f4 38.♗xf4 ♕a6

39.♘e2 ♕c4 40.♕e3 h6, when, despite the practical problems still remaining, he should be able to hold this endgame. **38.♘xf5!** Now Black's position collapses. **38...♕e6 39.♕g5 g6 40.♘h6+ ♔f8 41.♘g4 ♔e8 42.♘f6+ ♔f7 43.♘xh7 ♖a4**



44.♕d8! The quickest way to win. **44...♖a2+** Or 44...♕xe5 45.♘g5+ ♔g7 46.♕d7+. **45.♔g1** Black resigned. Thus Magnus succeeded for the first time in winning against an awkward opponent for him.

■ ■ ■

With the World Championship match only months away, it was natural that there should be special interest in the two games that Magnus Carlsen and Sergey Karjakin played in Bilbao. Of course it would be ridiculous to draw sweeping conclusions from these encounters, but it is so tempting to give them some weight that it is hard not to do so. Karjakin had this to say: 'I was just playing a tournament. I was practicing some openings, not very successfully, but still it was a nice experience. And I enjoyed the city, the people. My games with Magnus were actually also quite interesting. I think when I was Black I had a brilliant position, but I had to play one good move, 20...♘g6, to stop his play with f4, when I would probably have been better. At least I would have a very comfortable position. Then after I made a mistake he played quite well and won deservedly. I think I will draw some conclusions with my team. I will analyse these games, of course, but anyway, (with a laugh) the match will start from the score zero zero.'

We invited Simen Agdestein to provide comments to those games. Magnus Carlsen's first trainer picked up the gauntlet and inevitably has a lot to say that is of interest.

NOTES BY
Simen Agdestein

SI 47.15 – B50
Magnus Carlsen
Sergey Karjakin
Bilbao 2016 (3)

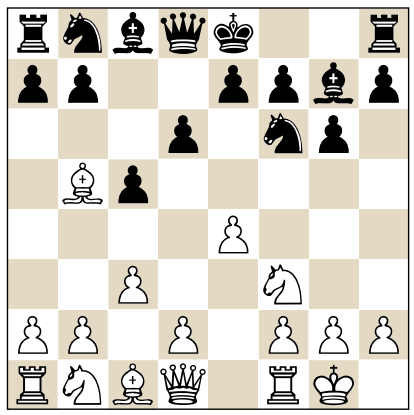
'Has it been a mystery to me that Magnus has become so good? All the time I have to pinch my arm!' Magnus's father says in the trailer for the film about Magnus that will appear in cinemas all over the world shortly. I have never really been that surprised, since my focus in the case of Magnus has always been on him becoming even more than World Champion. Still, I thought many times that it was all over, that the balloon had burst, that it couldn't go on like this forever. One such moment was after Magnus lost in the first round of the Bilbao Masters against Hikaru Nakamura. However, three days and three wins later, Magnus was in the clear lead and won the tournament convincingly. And not only that, he crushed the next World Championship contender in great style. Although both players say that it was just another game, Magnus winning this game must have been like scoring 1-0.

1.e4 There was some talk about the players hiding their opening preparation before the match, but I believe Magnus's approach is much more pragmatic. I guess he just felt like playing the king pawn this day.

1...c5

Karjakin is a bit easier to predict.

2.♘f3 d6 3.c3!? Magnus won't walk the well-trodden paths for too long. **3...♘f6 4.♗e2 g6 5.0-0 ♗g7 6.♗b5+**



I thought I'd never seen the position before, but when I looked it up, I saw that Magnus had played the same against Wang Hao in Norway Chess in 2013, when I was actually commentating for the organizers' website. Magnus's memory is brilliant, but mine is less so, I'm afraid. When I look more closely, however, I see that it was in the preliminary blitz that they played the game, which I guess should excuse me for not remembering.

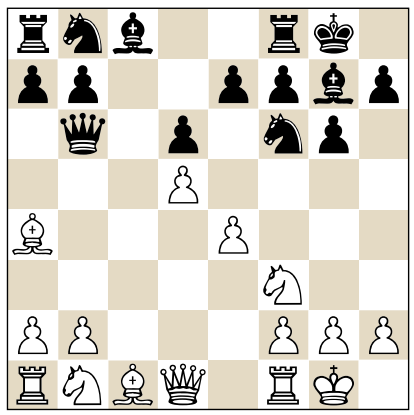
6...♘c6

Wang Hao played 6...♗d7, and after 7.♗xd7+ ♘fxd7 8.d4 it was 'just a game', but Magnus had his beloved pawn centre. He likes harmony, and two pawns in the middle certainly are harmonious.

7.d4 ♕b6

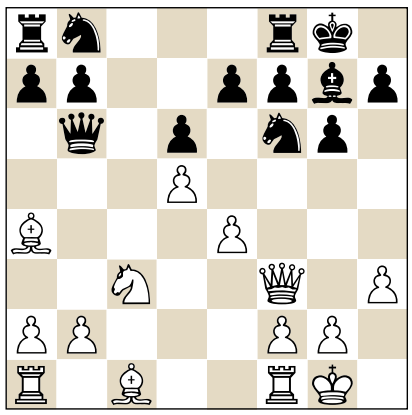
I can't recall at which speed the players made their moves, but to me it seems as if Magnus has achieved his goal of taking his opponent by surprise. The position is not completely new, but the strong guys haven't really agreed on how to treat the black side of this. There are many alternative plans.

8.♗a4 cxd4 9.cxd4 0-0 10.d5 ♘b8



I struggle with the expression 'A knight on the rim is dim' or something. In all languages, actually. 'Ein Springer am Rande ist ein Springer am Strande?' Or how was it again that Siegbert Tarrasch explained that a knight on the edge of the board is not very good? Anyway, 10...♘a5, with the single-minded idea of jumping to c4, was a decent alternative. 10...♘e5 is perhaps a weaker player's first choice, as going to the middle makes sense, but closing the long diagonal is nothing for players at this level, I guess.

11.♘c3 ♗g4 12.h3 ♗xf3 13.♕xf3



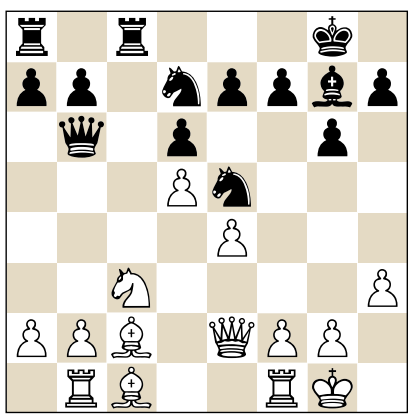
Magnus has the bishop pair and a space advantage, assets I'm also fond of, but Michael Adams thought me a lesson once that with a pawn structure like this Black can coordinate his pieces very well.

13...♘bd7 14.♖b1 ♖fc8 15.♗c2

It seemed as if White started off with a lead in development, but now Magnus has to struggle to find prosperous places for his pieces.

15...♘e5! The knight is back in the middle! If c4 was the goal, however, the route via b8 wasn't the fastest one.

16.♕e2 ♘fd7

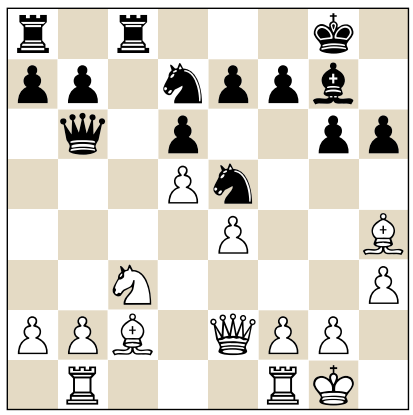


Objectively speaking, Black has won the opening battle, but as always with Magnus, that's not the point. Karjakin has been given challenges he had to solve over the board, and surprisingly soon he steps in the wrong direction.

17.♗g5 h6

Calculating is no problem for Karjakin, is my impression. It's not totally clear what happens after 18.♗xe7, as White can mess up things a lot after 18...f6, but 18...g5! 19.♘b5 ♘g6 20.♘xd6 (20.♗xd6 a6) 20...♘xe7 21.♘xc8 ♘xc8 certainly isn't to Magnus's liking.

18.♗h4

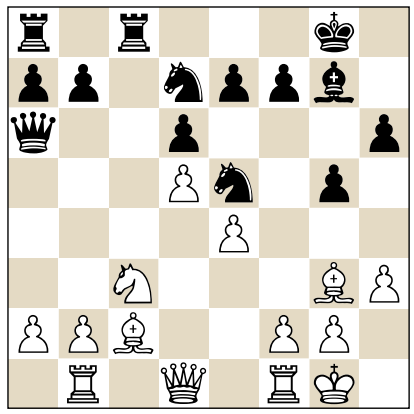


18...g5!?

I feel we're about to enter a stage of the game in which I should be careful with my positional judgements. This is a bit too Benoni-like for my taste, but I guess a player like Nakamura would be delighted with such dark-square dominance in the centre. I am not sure how confident Karjakin is here. Second World Champion Emanuel Lasker's trademark was to get his opponents out of their usual pattern, and I have often thought that Magnus is a bit like that. Kasparov had his dear Alekhine, and Karpov was like Capablanca, but I think that Magnus has taken the best from all of them, including Lasker.

19.♗g3 ♕a6 20.♕d1

A queen trade is out of the question. Doubled black pawns on the a-file are of no relevance here. It's all about whether Black's control of the dark squares has cost too much or not.



20...♖c4?

Sometimes I get impressed by judgements about players' strengths and weaknesses. Is that a tradition from the old Soviet school? You analyse your games, generalize and try to get rid of your weaknesses? Or even better, you analyse your opponent's games, make a 'profile' and try to take advantage of his weaknesses? My approach has rather been that you should linger on your wins as long and as much as possible. Get used to seeing yourself as a winner and use your wins to bolster your confidence, since that is more important than anything else. Endlessly analysing your losses hasn't the same building effect, at least not for me, and I believe not for Magnus either. You made a mistake in that particular position, but never mind, you will never get that position again anyway, so don't let it affect your mood and certainly not your confidence too much.

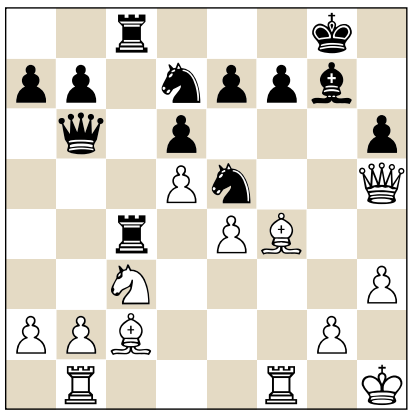
What can be said about Karjakin after this game and perhaps this move in particular, I'm not sure. Is it something about his sense of danger, or his positional understanding? I don't know, but what is certain is that Magnus now gets a free hand to launch a great initiative on the kingside without Black creating anything but displaced pieces on the other side. If you're the calculating type, there's a lot of work after 20...♘c4 21.♗d3 ♘c5 22.♗e2 ♗xc3 23.bxc3 ♘xe4, or even 23...♕xa2, since 24.♖a1 ♕b3 25.♕d4 ♘a4 seems to hold, but the positional approach is just 20...♘g6, and any counterplay for White seems a long way off.

21.♔h1 ♖ac8

Now it's too late for 21...♘g6, since Black's previous move allows 22.♗d3.

22.f4! gxf4 23.♗xf4 ♕b6 24.♕h5!

While Black is just fumbling around on the queenside, White has already created very concrete threats on the other side.



24...♘f6

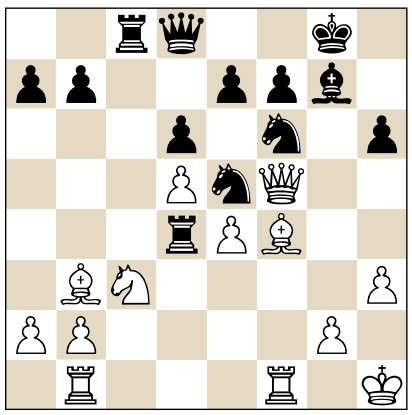
24...♔h7 certainly isn't a safe haven for Black's king. There's no structure to hide behind. The only chance is to fight the forces with pieces.

25.♕f5 ♕d8 26.♗b3

Winning a pawn on e5 is too little in principle, since Black would regain his dark-square control, but here taking twice on e5 will eventually run into ...♘xe4.

26...♖d4

This rook has not been very successful, but I'm surprised by how Magnus exploits its shortcomings.



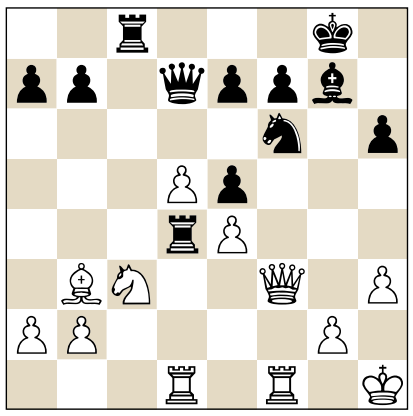
27.♗xe5

I guess I would have spent all my energy on 27.♗e3, and perhaps Karjakin did too, but Magnus makes it look very simple.

27...dxe5 28.♖bd1

I would never have managed to come up with this plan! I guess Magnus's reasoning is simply to take away the most active black pieces to eliminate all counterplay.

28...♕d7 29.♕f3

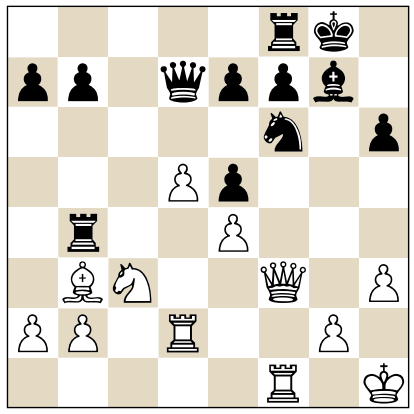


29...♖b4 Another critical decision with the rook.

It's easy to suggest 29...♖xd1 to cut some claws, but White can take with either the bishop or the knight, and suddenly it's all about the light squares, where White is in command.

30.♖d2 ♖f8

The f7-square had to be covered, but after Magnus's next move it becomes clear that even worse demons will appear on the g-file.



MARIA EMELIANOVA

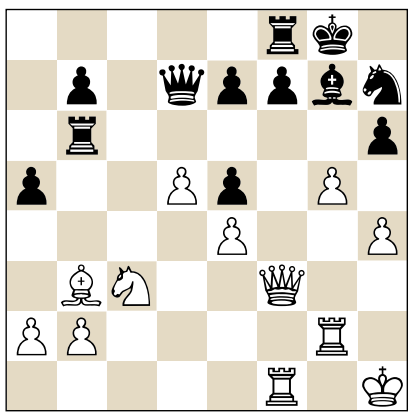
Sergey Karjakin rightly remarked that the match in New York will start with the score 0-0, but Magnus Carlsen's win in Bilbao seemed to underpin that the Norwegian will be the clear favourite.

Bilbao 2016

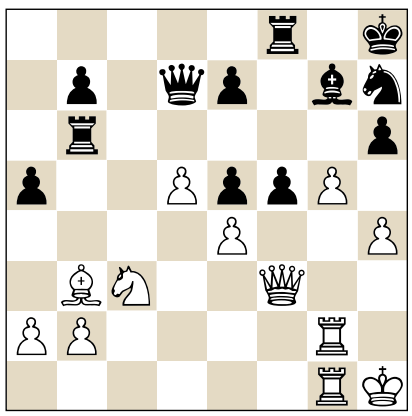
				1	2	3	4	5	6		TPR
1 Magnus Carlsen	IGM	NOR	2855	**	0 1	1 3	3 1	3 1	3 1	17	2872
2 Hikaru Nakamura	IGM	USA	2787	1 3	**	1 1	1 1	1 1	1 1	12	2812
3 Wei Yi	IGM	CHN	2696	0 1	1 1	**	1 1	1 1	3 1	11	2794
4 Wesley So	IGM	USA	2770	1 0	1 1	1 1	**	1 1	3 1	11	2779
5 Sergey Karjakin	IGM	RUS	2773	1 0	1 1	1 1	1 1	**	1 1	9	2743
6 Anish Giri	IGM	NED	2785	1 0	1 1	1 0	1 0	1 1	**	7	2666

3 points for a win, 1 for a draw

31.g4! a5
This is tantamount to resigning. Black's initiative on the queenside is obviously too slow, and it doesn't lead to much anyway. I don't know if there's a moral in this somewhere, but Karjakin could have at least tried to stop White's obvious onslaught.
32.♖g2 ♘h7 33.h4 ♖b6 34.g5



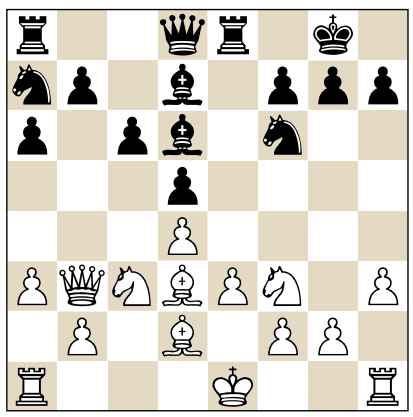
34...♔h8 First the f-file was weak. Now Karjakin tries to run away from the g-file, but with the king in the corner, taking on g5 disappears as an option. But perhaps it was too late anyway. After 34...hxg5 35.hxg5 ♖g6 36.♕h5 White can follow up with ♖f5 and doubling on the h-file. Black can perhaps avoid mate by escaping with the knight to f8, but then White can simply drop back to the f-file and attack f7. Black's only hope, perhaps, was 34...♖g6 35.♕h5? ♕h3+ 36.♔g1 ♖xg5, but Magnus can instead play 35.♖fg1 or 35.♕f5.
35.♖fg1 f5
If I remember correctly, Karjakin even was in time-trouble here, but it doesn't really matter. Black's pieces lack all coordination, whereas Magnus's pieces work beautifully together.



36.♕h3 There are different ways to do it now. **36...♖b4** This rook again! With 36...♖g6 it would at least have entered the battle, but after 37.gxh6 ♖xg2 38.♕xg2 ♗xh6 39.d6 e6 40.♕g6 it's all over anyway.
37.gxh6 ♗xh6 38.♕g3
Mate is threatened on g8.
38...♘f6 39.♕g6 ♘g4 40.♖xg4
Black resigned.
Magnus won this game with great ease and in the second encounter with reversed colours Karjakin showed an even bleaker face with the white pieces by going for something he thought was a draw.

NI 27.4 – D38
Sergey Karjakin
Magnus Carlsen
Bilbao 2016 (8)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♗b4 5.♕a4+ ♘c6 6.e3 0-0 7.♕c2 ♖e8 8.♗d2 a6 9.a3 ♗d6 10.h3 ♗d7 11.cxd5 exd5 12.♗d3 ♘a7 13.♕b3 c6



14.♕xb7?! With this move Karjakin admits that a draw was his ambition, but he was actually lucky to get it.
14...♘b5 15.♘xb5 axb5
Magnus accepts the invitation to a short work day, but the computer gives Black an advantage after 15...cxb5. It's not totally clear, but Karjakin would certainly have had to struggle hard to avoid an even worse prelude for the match.
16.♘e5 ♖b8 17.♕a6 ♖a8 18.♕b7 ♖b8 19.♕a6 ♖a8 ½-½

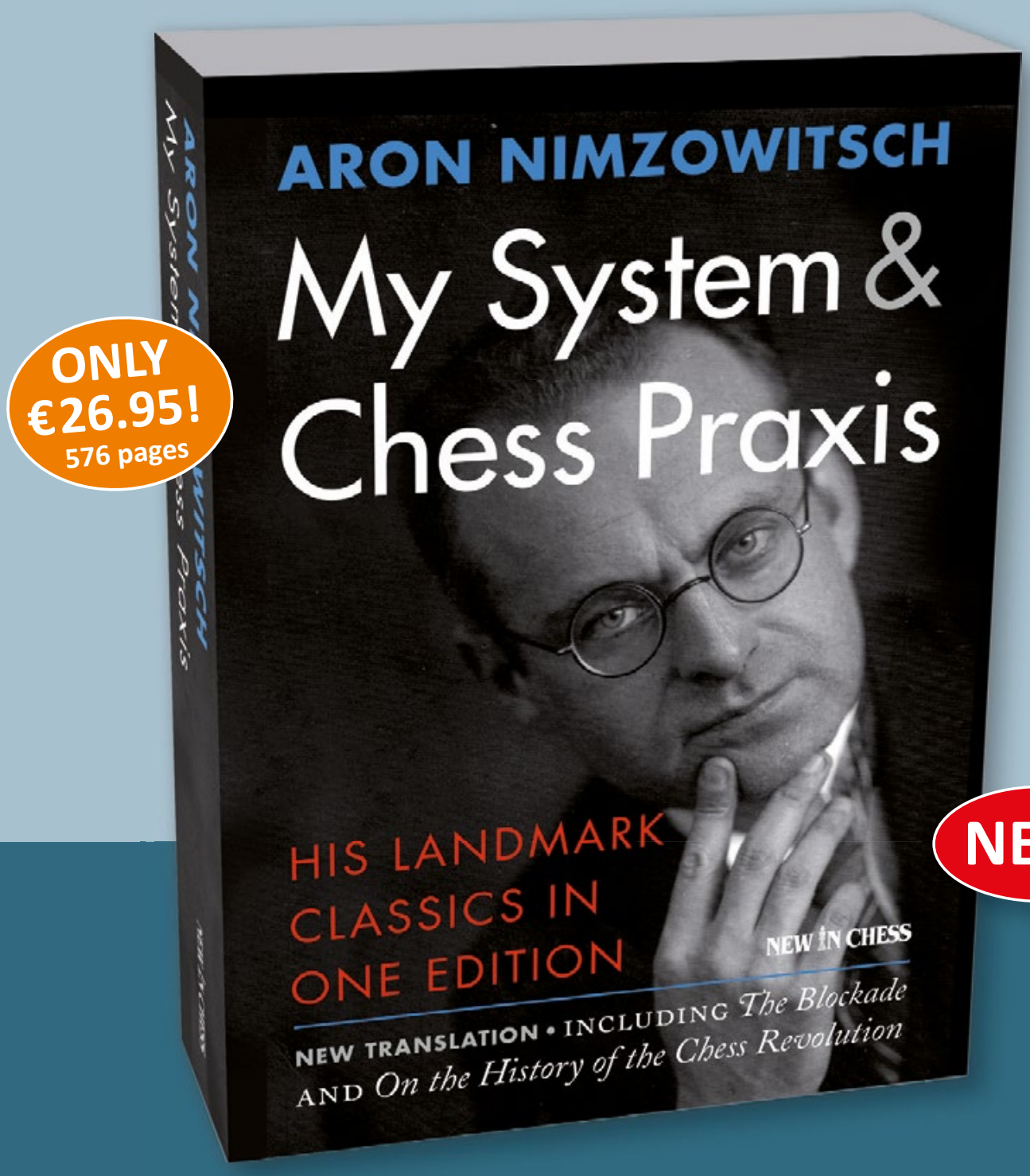
Of course, I am highly biased, but I think Magnus Carlsen will also win his third World Championship match. The results speak for themselves. He has proven himself a worthy champion in many ways.

'In Norway we're preparing for another giant chess show in the media.'

But you never know, especially with matches. Still, I believe that having been through it all before should count for something. Now Magnus is the experienced one. How Karjakin will handle the pressure is hard to predict. From what I have heard, Karjakin gets all the assistance he can think of from the Russian authorities, but in the end you have to do the fighting alone. As Anand surely must have felt with the hordes of Indians rooting for him, it's not easy to have too much support either.

Just handling New York will perhaps also be an issue, and the enormous interest the match will generate certainly will be. In Norway we're preparing for another giant chess show in the media. During the previous matches banks had to close their Internet connection to make sure their employees worked instead of following Magnus's games. This is about much more than playing chess, and I'm curious to see how Karjakin will react to all the questions from our media. Actually, Karjakin is quite popular in Norway, as he has won the first two Norway Chess tournaments. In fact, both Carlsen and Karjakin have already been invited for the 2017 edition. So the World Champion will take part regardless. It only remains to be seen who that will be. ■

Finally the English translation he deserved!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Images of Gyula Breyer are a rarity. This portrait, showing the brilliant Hungarian innovator at the age of 26, featured on a personalized custom-made postcard which Breyer used at the time.

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We all know the Breyer Variation, the famous retreat 9...♘b8 in the Ruy Lopez. But what do we know about the man who first proposed this system and played such a major role in broadening our understanding of the modern game of chess? Today, Gyula Breyer, whose playing career lasted only about ten years, may justly be called an unsung hero. Yet he packed a huge amount of creative energy into this decade before dying, in 1921, poverty-stricken at only 28 years of age. **JIMMY ADAMS** looks at the legacy of a unique and highly original mind.

Gyula Breyer

The Revolutionary

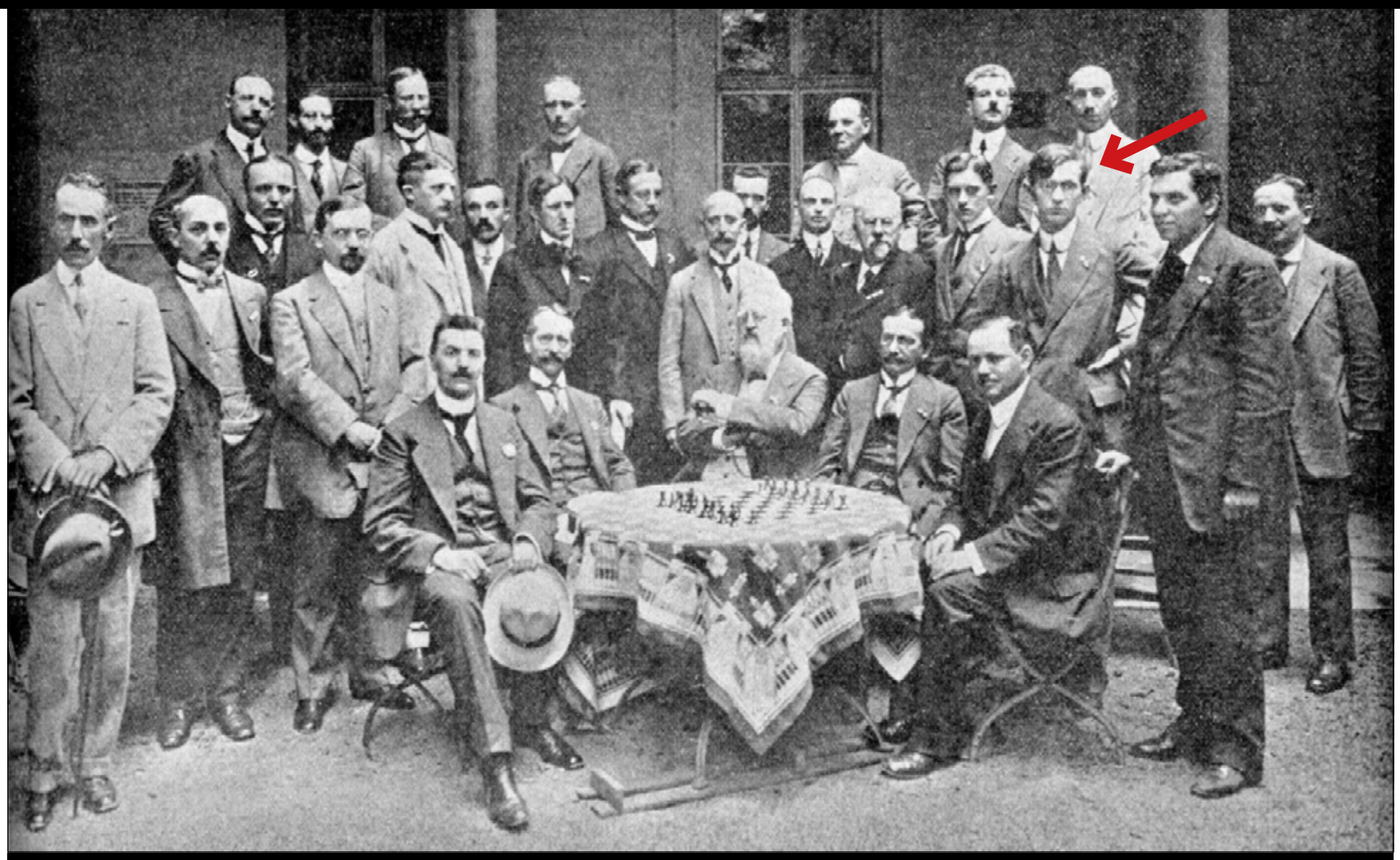
'Around 1910, on the premises of the Budapest Chess Club in Academy Street, a 16-17 year old bespectacled, thin and tall young boy could often be seen, who, if he wasn't playing, had usually retired to the corner, busying himself at a chessboard. In this way, he would often amuse himself for hours. He did not participate much in conversation, replied briefly to questions put to him, and was generally very taciturn.

'He took part diligently in the internal club tournaments, achieved good results and always excelled in the originality of his conduct of play, especially in the initial phase of the game. He made few remarks, but, when he did, he always created a stir and even indignation with his conceptions, which were contrary to the principles which were then generally accepted and held to be exclusively correct. Precisely because of this outlook and his behaviour, which was unusual for a young man, he was considered an eccentric.'

This was how the Hungarian Master Lajos Asztalos remembered the arrival of Gyula Breyer on the Budapest chess scene. And although at that point Asztalos could not have foreseen the young man's dramatic future, he did notice the independence and singularity that would make Breyer, alongside Réti, Tartakower and Nimzowitsch, one of the most influential 'Hypermoderns'.

The Hypermoderns, or Neo-Romantics, hoped to free the game from the shackles of classical dogma, so prevalent in the late 19th and early 20th century. Or more specifically, from the rigid general principles laid down by Dr Tarrasch that had led to an excess of routine play. A handful of brilliant young masters, working independently of each other, set out to devise new initiative-seeking openings and other methods of play with which they could obtain complex positions to challenge the old guard.

Alekhine and Bogoljubow are also frequently mentioned as belonging to this group, but controversially so, as Bogoljubow himself made clear after his victory in the great Moscow 1925



Mannheim 1914. Breyer (arrowed) was greatly respected by both Alekhine and Réti, who flank him on either side. Next but one in line stands Dr. Tartakower. Together with Nimzowitsch, these players changed chess forever.

tournament: 'I consider my style is closer to the old classical school, least of all to the unsystematic play of Breyer (...) Hypermodernism, as a school, does not exist. Or rather it exists only as a visual notion of chess art, striving to find new paths in chess, particularly in the theory of the openings; however the paths along which it travels are quite different. Whereas Réti and Tartakower adopt new principal forms in the area of the openings, I strive for a deepening and perfecting of myself in the game as a whole.'

But, ironically, Breyer too did not confine his new theories to the opening. He analysed the starting position as if it were a middlegame and regarded opening books as 'basically nothing but analyses of this sole, seemingly simple, position'. To which he added: '... but the truth is that *the basic position is as little simple as it is clear.*'

Elsewhere Breyer noted: 'It is known that a mediocre player is unable to apply his mind properly to the openings. He is exhausted by the excessive number of possibilities. Outstanding masters, such as Nimzowitsch and Tartakower, are masters of the business right from the start of the game and select those moves which are unusual for the opponent, that is to say they do not play what the opponent wants. However, this endeavour of theirs runs more or less to ground in the so-called middlegame. Here they find fewer possibilities for selection and their personality does not stand out so markedly as in the openings.'

■ ■ ■

One of the very few latter-day chess writers to appreciate Breyer's extraordinary vision was English chess historian R.N.Coles. In his insightful book *Dynamic Chess*, first published in 1956, he wrote: 'The first impetus towards a more complicated style of play came from Gyula Breyer, who instead of selecting openings where the objectives were small but clear-cut from the outset, not only to himself but also to his opponent, preferred to build up a position full of dynamic energy – "malignant energy" Tartakower called it – which could be released at will at a suitable target and at a suitable moment. In the early part of the game, during which this energy was being created and stored, Breyer often made moves which were in direct conflict with the tenets of the classical style but which were found later to fit perfectly into his scheme of play when the pent-up energy was finally released.'

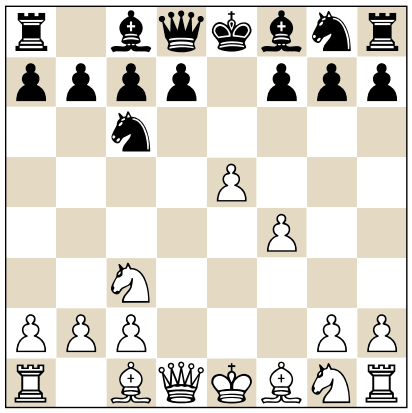
The following sensational example was then given to illustrate this very point:

VO 4.1 – B00
Max Euwe
Gyula Breyer
Vienna 1921

1.e4 ♘c6 2.♘c3 ♘f6

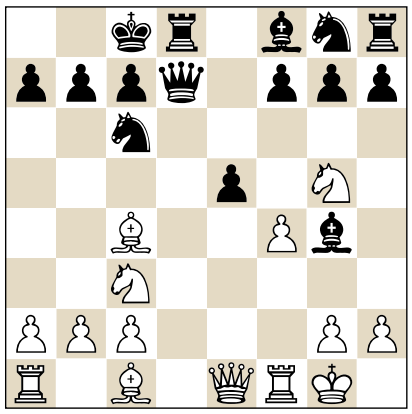
'Later Nimzowitsch used to answer 1.e4 by developing his queen's knight, while Alekhine tried developing his king's knight, but Breyer's line, with the development of both knights before moving a pawn, is peculiarly his own.'

3.d4 e5 4.dxe5 ♘xe5 5.f4 ♘c6 6.e5 ♘g8



'Although White has now gained in both time and space, he will have some difficulty in holding on to his advanced post on e5. This idea, that too early an advance creates weaknesses, was typical of the dynamic line of thought.'

7.♗c4 d6 8.♘f3 ♗g4 9.0-0 ♕d7 10.♕e1 0-0-0 11.♘g5 dxe5



'The first surprising release of energy. If now 12.♘xf7 ♕d4+ 13.♔h1 ♕xc4 14.♘xh8, and Black virtually has two pieces for his rook. The best line for White was the simple 12.♗b3.'

12.♔h1 f6 'Now, in return for the sacrifice of the exchange after White's ♘f7 it is Black who has the strong point on e5, a surprising turn after his opening moves.'

Breyer went on to win in 30 moves. It was truly grandmaster chess as it had never been played before – and against a future World Champion! Unlike Réti and Nimzowitsch, Breyer was not so preoccupied with the question of whether it was better to control or occupy the centre, as he was with the creation of lively play and complicated positions, with both the white and black pieces!

After his untimely death in 1921, Breyer was praised by his contemporaries. Savielly Tartakower wrote in *Kagan's Neueste Schachnachrichten*: 'Breyer must, without exaggeration, be numbered amongst the all-time greats of the chess fraternity!'

However, apart from a few warm-hearted commemorative articles, Breyer's name then virtually disappeared into oblivion, being overshadowed by the games and writings of Nimzowitsch, and those of his friend Réti, who was, however, not shy to admit: 'We all learned from Breyer'.

■ ■ ■

Breyer timed his entrance into the world of chess perfectly. Between 1911-1913 the Budapest Chess Club livened up considerably, holding many tournaments with strong Hungarian players and also hosting a number of simultaneous displays. In one of these, against World Champion Emanuel Lasker, Breyer unleashed a mating attack and won in twenty moves.

In 1911, after winning a couple of small tournaments in Budapest whilst on his university summer vacation, the young Breyer was invited to take part in an international tournament in Cologne, held alongside a match between Schlechter and Tarrasch. This proved to be a successful debut as he finished only a point below the winner.

Naturally he was then expected to do great things at the first Hungarian Championship which followed immediately afterwards. However, by playing in his fourth consecutive tournament without a break, Breyer had not taken into account his physical condition and he was obliged to withdraw through exhaustion three rounds before the end, after having lost every(!) game, albeit after hard fights.

Gyula Breyer
a short timeline

1893, April 30: Born in Budapest.
1901, April: Mentioned as a 7-year-old problem solver in *Pesti Napló*.
1911, January: Defeats Emanuel Lasker in a simul.
1912, June-July: Finishes only just below world-class players in Pöstyén and Breslau.
1912, August: Wins Hungarian Championship.
1914, May/August: 4th place in both Baden gambit and Mannheim grandmaster tournaments.
1916, December: Wins Budapest Masters, defeating Esser with first outing of Budapest Gambit.
1917: Writes sensational articles in *Magyar Sakkvilág* which turn chess theory upside down!
1918, September 17: Marries after completing university studies and starts work as an engineer.
1920, December: Wins Berlin, defeating a world-class field.
1921, January-September: Runs ground-breaking weekly chess column in *Becsi Magyar Újság*.
1921, January 30: World simultaneous blindfold record of 25 boards in Kassa.
1921, April 13: Daughter is born.
1921, May: 'Most brilliant player' in Vienna tournament.
1921, November 9: Dies in Bratislava from heart disease.

Yet, undaunted by this setback, Breyer soon came back strongly in the next year with a series of significant achievements both in Hungary and abroad. Following two high placings in major grandmaster tournaments at Pöstyén and Breslau, Breyer now started as one of the favourites in the 2nd Hungarian Chess Federation championship at Temesvár. And, as it turned out, this tournament was to

bring Breyer a splendid domestic triumph as he won the title in most convincing style. It is worth mentioning that of the leading Hungarian players only the famous Geza Maróczy was missing as he had temporarily taken leave of chess to devote himself fully to his professional work. But, as for Breyer, well, it cannot be very often that a player scores no points at all in a national championship and then the following year wins it outright!

■ ■ ■

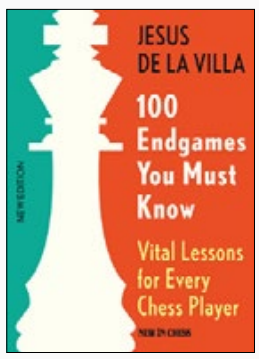
In the next two years Breyer's results remained below expectations after his earlier successes. Besides certain outstanding individual achievements, there occurred unexpected defeats as well. Asztalos gave the following explanation: 'We must look for the reason for this not only in excessive play and his weak physique, but also in his style of play. The greater proportion of his opponents played opening variations learned from books and did not feel comfortable when steered into unknown paths. "We must play something unusual against them", Breyer used to keep saying. And, indeed, in most games he did invent something "unusual" but this did not always meet with success. The risks were too many and too great and therefore Breyer often in fact got into precarious situations. In such suspect positions even his magnificent ingenuity and tenacity could not always help. Hence the mediocre results which were not always true reflections of his playing strength.'

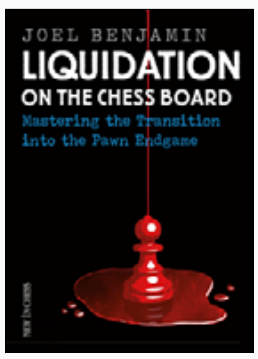
'It cannot be very often that a player scores no points at all in a national championship and then the following year wins it outright!'

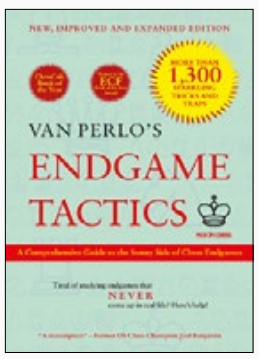
At the beginning of 1914, he took part in a 'Gambit tournament', organized on the impetus of the Viennese master George Marco at Baden-bei-Wien. Although Breyer quickly adjusted to the rather unaccustomed gambit style of play, and finished a creditable 4th behind the gambiteers Spielmann and Tartakower, and the highest rated player Schlechter, he later jokingly commented on his new experience, 'This was a gambit tournament, King's Gambit, Evans Gambit, Centre Gambit, Danish Gambit and Scotch Gambit could all be played. Though with a bit of luck I could have got to first place, I decided never to compete in a gambit tournament again. As White: I lose a pawn; as Black: I am checkmated!'

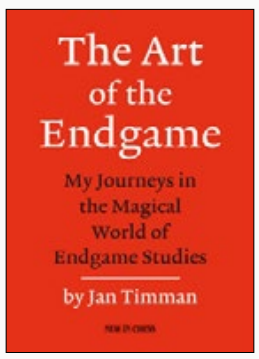
In the following Mannheim tournament, Breyer stood in 4th place when the event was interrupted by the outbreak of the First World War. Alekhine, who incidentally was the same age as Breyer, topped the table. Perhaps the most noteworthy game played by Breyer was his demolition of Tarrasch's favourite Open Defence to the Ruy Lopez, after which the good doctor seemed to have shown not just respect but also a fondness for his young rival. Later Tarrasch even included one of their mutual encounters amongst the few illustrative games given in his classic book *The Game of Chess*, stating 'This is one of the best, and, at the same time, one of the most difficult games, I have played in my life.' Certainly,

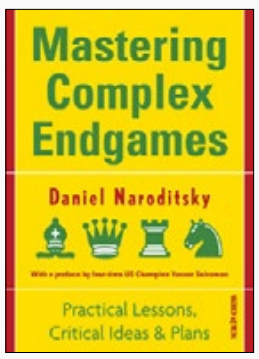
Any plans to work on your endgame?











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despite their diametrically opposing views on how chess should be played, there was never any question whatsoever of bad feeling between them, as was the case with Tarrasch and Nimzowitsch.

■ ■ ■

Breyer did not do any military service during the war, probably because of his weak heart but also as he was still pursuing his university studies, although he only obtained his engineering degree at the age of 25 after the war was over.

At this time Budapest chess players were fortunate to have as their club secretary István Abonyi, a player of master class and a devoted chess patron. Towards the end of 1914, Abonyi acquired for the Budapest Chess Club a self-contained room on the second floor of a building in Charles Square, which was comfortably furnished, well equipped, and included a buffet.

Tournaments with nice prizes, such as gramophones, were held at the Budapest Chess Club during the war. Particularly memorable was a four-player double round tournament held in November-December 1916, where the final scores were: Breyer 5; Von Balla 2½; Réti 2; Esser 1½.

Dr. Esser, a pioneering plastic surgeon from Holland, was at the time living in the Hungarian capital, working with the Red Cross, and it was against him that Breyer played the Budapest Gambit – the first time it had been seen in a tournament game.

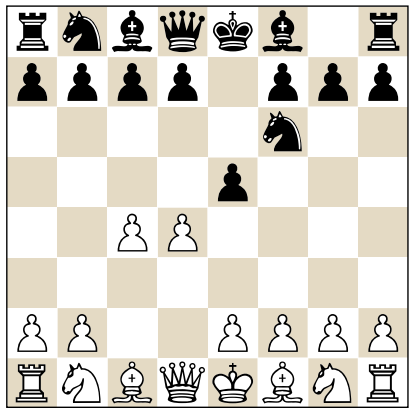
VO 17.2 – A52
Jan Esser
Gyula Breyer
Budapest Four masters 1916

1.d4 ♘f6

'We have a young master who swears on oath that this move is better than the routine 1...d5, because in contrast to that pawn move, which cannot be retracted, Black will not now be bound to any one system of development' was the comment in *Magyar Sakkvilág*.

2.c4 The next move must have come as quite a shock to Esser!

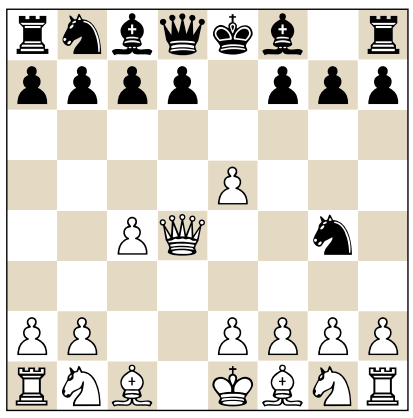
2...e5



This can justifiably be named the Budapest Gambit as it was originally the suggestion of Barasz who then analysed it with Breyer. However Abonyi encouraged Breyer to analyse it more deeply and was the driving force behind its further promotion.

3.dxe5 ♘g4 4.♕d4

4.♘f3 is met by 4...♗c5, which forces 5.e3, enabling Black to win his pawn back with 5...♘c6.

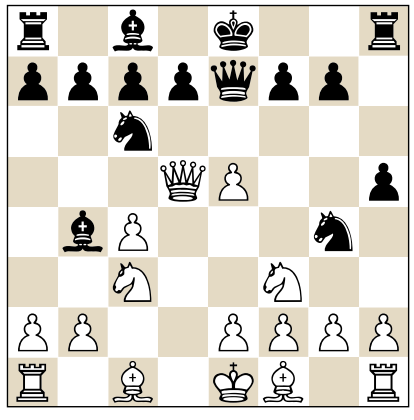


4...h5 Typically extreme play from Breyer, but Black also has 4...d6, e.g. 5.exd6 ♗xd6 6.♘f3 (6.♕xg7 ♗e5) 6...0-0 7.♗g5 f6 with a good position.

5.♘f3

If 5.h3 ♘c6 6.♕e4 ♘gxe5; or 5.f4 ♘c6 6.♕d5 ♘b4 with 7...♗c5 to follow.

5...♘c6 6.♕d5 ♗b4+ 7.♘c3 ♕e7

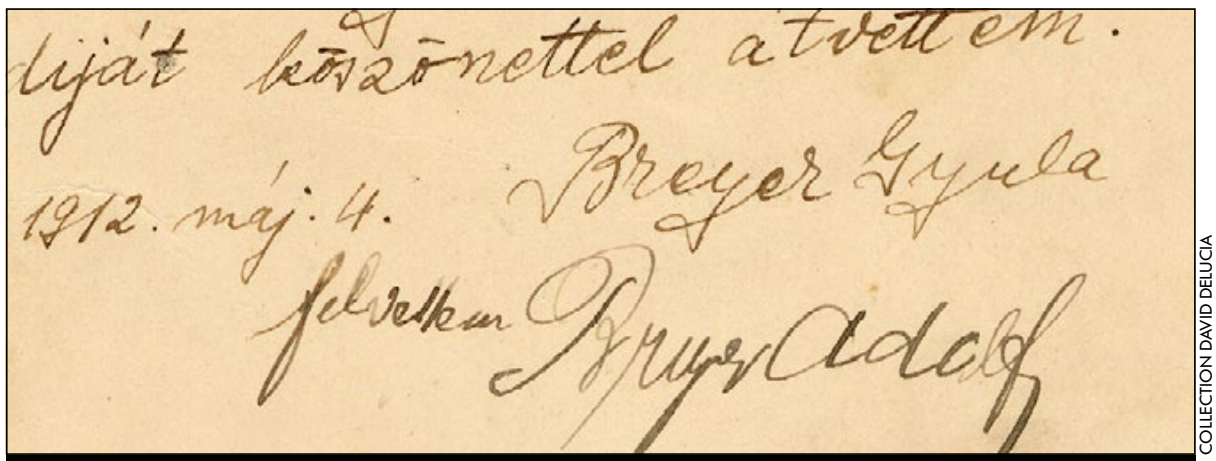


8.♗f4 On 8.♗g5 ♗xc3+ 9.bxc3 follows 9...♕a3, a manoeuvre which was employed in a similar position in the game, Rubinstein-Vidmar, Berlin 1918, which Black won in 25 moves. The Budapest Gambit reached its highest achievement in this four-man master tournament, scoring 2½ points out of 3 games!

8...b6 Simpler, according to Schlechter, was 8...♗xc3+ 9.bxc3 ♕a3 10.♗d2 ♕b2 11.♖c1 ♕xa2 with a good game for Black.

9.h3 ♘h6 10.♖c1 ♗b7 11.a3 ♗xc3+ 12.♖xc3 0-0-0 13.e3 ♖dg8!

Not only preparing ...g5 but a fine problem-like introduction to a well-calculated combination, which will

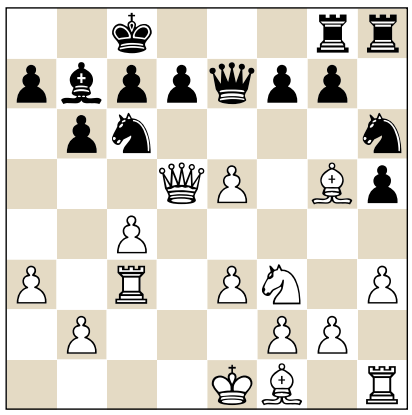


On this calling card is the handwriting of the chess revolutionary.

COLLECTION DAVID DELUCIA

lead to the collapse of White's position. In the following moves Esser is under the false impression that he will win a piece.

14.♗g5 White endeavours to prevent the break on the g-file, but Black nevertheless will very skilfully carry out this plan.



14...f6! This seems like a mistake, but it is the introduction to a decisive attack. **15.exf6 gxf6 16.♗xh6?** Instead of this tempting capture, 16.♗h4 is stronger, e.g. 16...♘e5 17.♕xe5 ♕xe5 18.♘xe5 fxe5 19.♗f6 ♖h7 20.♗xe5 ♗xg2 21.♖g1 ♗xf1 22.♖xg8+ ♘xg8 23.♔xf1 and White enters the endgame a pawn up.

16...♘e5! And Black went over to a counterattack and eventually won.

In this same tournament, against Réti, Breyer played the King's Indian Defence, which was then a rarity, and duly destroyed the white pawn centre in 'hypermodern' fashion. Clearly, at this time Breyer was way ahead of Réti in his understanding of fianchetto openings and it was in fact his pioneering efforts that paved the way for further development of these in the post-war period.

■ ■ ■

While chess activity was drastically reduced in Europe during the war years, ironically for Breyer it proved to be a productive time for creative thought.

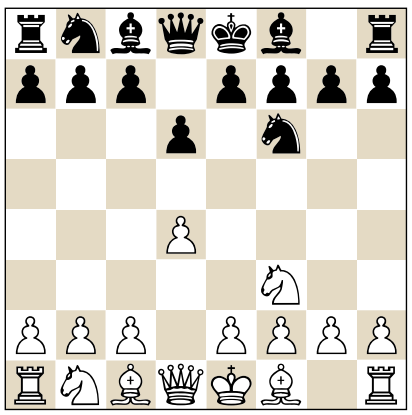
Asztalos wrote: 'The fruits of his chess meditations are shown in the 1917/1918 issues of *Magyar Sakkvilág*... His essays entitled "A complicated position" and "1.d4!! d5??" reveal the intensely individual character of his chess thoughts. To whoever would it have occurred before, that the move 1.e4 also has defects, or in the Italian Game, c4 is not a satisfactory square for the bishop? Or whoever would have thought that, against the Sicilian Defence, 3.d4 is not the best continuation, because it gives up the centre d-pawn for the somewhat less valuable black c-pawn?! These and still many other similar thoughts were struggling in his enormously able brain.'

When analysing openings, time and again Breyer began his train of thought from the starting position ('A complicated position') and his annotations to games showed how different were his conceptions when compared to the contemporary world of opening books and articles, which consisted mainly of variations, as indeed they do today. Because of this he understandably attracted attention, generating sympathy and antipathy, admiration and criticism.

The following abridged extract from an article by Breyer in *Magyar Sakkvilág* typifies his approach to the openings which was to have a major impact on Réti, who adopted the same style in his classic book *Masters of the Chessboard*.

OI 3.10 - A55
Karl Schlechter
Gyula Breyer
Budapest 1918

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d6



'Better than ...d5. It is a very correct and, in books, often voiced principle, that the possession of the centre is very important. The school of previous decades tried to implement this principle by advancing the centre pawns with undue haste. The consequence of this was that these pawns were destroyed just as speedily as the rapidity and vehemence with which they occupied their position. The leader of the black pieces constantly bears in mind: *On the wings, the centre can only mean the squares on his half of the board*. In order to prove the correctness of this principle, it is sufficient to weigh up the strategic consequences of the moves d4 and d6. What is more important for White: that no black piece can reach e5 or c5, or e4 and c4. It is obvious that the latter possibility is more dangerous for White. Not to mention the fact that after d2-d3 there may still be time to chase away the black pieces standing respectively on e5 and c5.

Black quite correctly does in fact hold the 'centre', the c5- and e5-squares, to which he does not allow the enemy pieces. The modern school generally plays to this principle (see games by Nimzowitsch, Alekhine and Tartakower). The proof that the label "defensive" is an incorrect definition of this method of play, an assertion first made 10-20 years ago, is that the above-mentioned trio, who defend in this way, are counted amongst the most forceful and ingenious attacking players around today. Everything develops in nature, and the game of chess is no exception. The newer generation, which discovered this error of the past, was first met with gently smiling faces, but the multitude of games won turned these faces serious and rehabilitated the "irregular" openings.

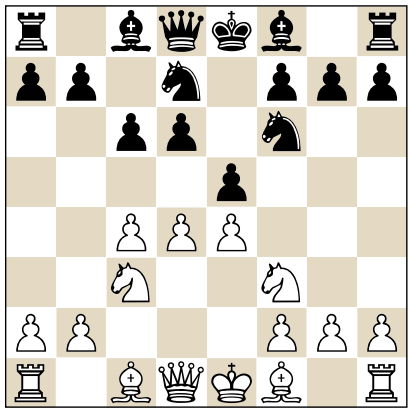
The youngest guard will perhaps begin its game with the moves c3, d3, etc., and the opening phase will resemble the serious and cautious preparatory struggles of wrestlers, rather than the belligerent words of

performers in a duel scene, which, under a surface of apparent seriousness, are empty and not in the least serious.

3.c4

A very crude error. This assertion follows from what has been said before.

3...♘bd7 4.♘c3 e5 5.e4 c6



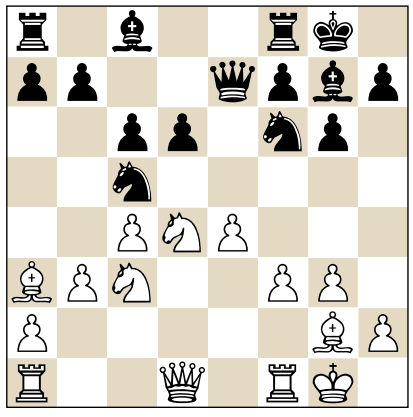
6.g3

The role of the bishop on the h1-a8 diagonal is not justified. 6.♗e2 was correct, and then the b3, ♗b2 development. Both parties urgently need their bishop on the a1-h8 diagonal. The grandmaster is struggling with a strong indisposition and makes a mistake often made by young players, thus demonstrating a not too good chess sense.

6...g6 7.♗g2 ♕e7

Black has an opportunity to place his queen, instead of on the usual c7, on a square where it can play a more active role. An immediate 7...♗g7 did not work because of 8.dxe5 dxe5 9.♕d6.

8.0-0 ♗g7 9.b3 0-0 10.♗a3 exd4 11.♘xd4 ♘c5 12.f3

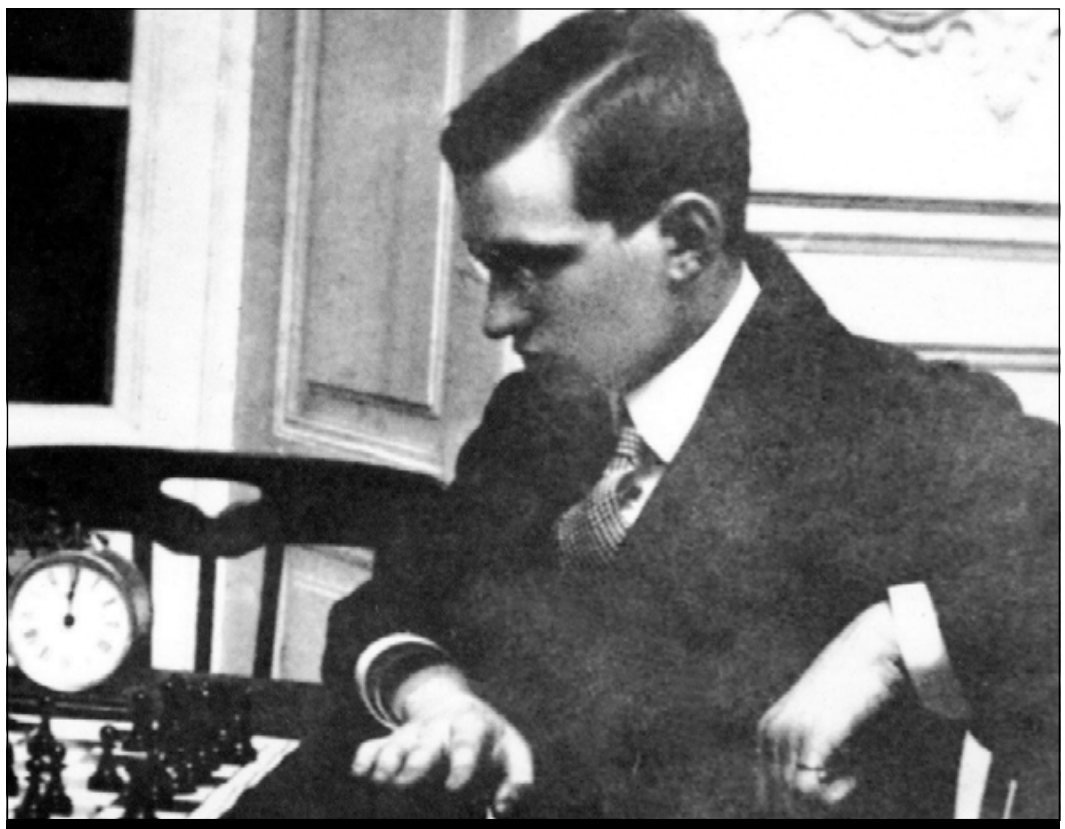


12...♘fd7 The old school says: We must develop our pieces as quickly as possible and should only move a piece once in the opening. By development, they meant you must step off the first rank. I must point out the incorrect nature of this definition, just by reference to this position, where, at present, the c8-bishop stands best on the very square from which it has not even moved and which is on the first rank. The old masters subscribed to this theory through fear of being checkmated before their pieces were developed from the first rank. The modern masters, such as Réti, concluded quite correctly that one should endeavour to place a piece, already brought into play, on to the best square intended for it, and only after that to continue one's development. Very nice examples of these pre-development manoeuvres can be seen in Capablanca's games.

In the position before us, Black wants to isolate the e-pawn with the move ...f5, so that the knight on d7 may occupy the excellent e5-square as soon as possible.

13.♘ce2 f5 14.exf5 ♕e3+ 15.♔h1 ♘d3 16.♗c1 ♘f2+ 17.♖xf2 White sacrifices the exchange to free himself from his bad position.'

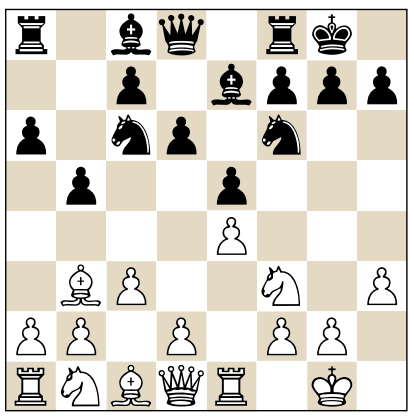
And after a further hard struggle Breyer eventually won a two rooks versus rook and bishop endgame.



Pöstyén 1912. In only his second international tournament, 19-year-old Gyula Breyer had already joined ranks with the masters.

Following on from this, it can be seen how Breyer hit upon the move 9...♘b8 for Black against the Ruy Lopez. Though the specific article in which Breyer advocated this move has not yet been found, his contemporary, the Viennese master Hans Müller, wrote about it in *Schach Echo*:

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 0-0 8.c3 d6 9.h3



9...♘b8 'This peculiar, but well thought out retreating move was first

recommended by the Hungarian master Breyer in one of his brilliant opening essays as an improvement on the classical Chigorin Defence. In order to understand the point of this move, let's continue with the *usual* way of playing for a few moves: 9...♘a5 10.♗c2 c5 11.d4 ♕c7. In the basic position of the Chigorin system now reached and characterised by the central formation d4, e4 against c5 and e5, Black safeguards the e5-pawn, although in the course of which he somewhat loosens the queenside because of the moves ...b5 and ...c5.

'If we remember correctly, in the above-mentioned essay Breyer put forward the following argument: "Is there no way for Black to sufficiently secure the key e5-square without the 'positional liability' of ...c7-c5 and in the course of which combine the defence of it with the activation of the hard to develop bishop on c8?"

And so he came up with the 'pre-development' knight manoeuvre 9...♘b8, which bears some similarity with his ...♘fd7 redeployment against Schlechter.

Iván Bottlik writes: 'I also had a discussion about the Breyer Variation with grandmaster Barcza two years before he died. He too said that he was told by Viennese players that 9...♘b8 was recommended by Breyer.'

Richard Réti, pioneer of the Hypermodern movement, admitted: 'We all learned from Breyer.'

The proclamation 'After 1.e4 White's game is in its last throes' is commonly attributed to Breyer, and originates from his assertion that after 1.e4 e6 2.d4 Black can immediately commence an attack on White's king's pawn by ...b6 and ...♗b7 and eventually undermine his centre.

On the other hand Breyer declared 1.d4 to be the strongest first move, against which Black should not play 1...d5 but instead the flexible 1...♘f6!, considered inferior at the time but in fact holding prospects of counterplay rather than mere equality. Breyer can therefore justly take a great deal of credit for inspiring the subsequent development of the Réti Opening and Indian Defences in the 1920s.

■ ■ ■

In August 1918 an international tournament was held in Kassa, formerly part of Hungary but after the First World War absorbed by Czechoslovakia and known by its Slovak name of Košice. This city had a lively chess community and was proud of its association with the legendary Rudolf Charousek to whom the tournament was dedicated. It was here that Richard Réti gained his first great success, defeating his nearest rival, Vidmar, in the last round. Meanwhile Breyer finished in a creditable 3rd to 4th place with Schlechter. The first appearance of the 'Hypermoderns' in an international tournament had been successful!

Breyer married shortly afterwards,

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on 17 September 1918. It was a love match which did not meet with the parents' approval. His bride was a poor girl, Teréz Balikó. He could hardly expect any parental support because of the opposition to his marriage – and the loss of the war, ensuing economic problems, inflation and unemployment, dogged the young couple.

In the aftermath of the First World War, the political situation was in turmoil with a pattern book of new states being formed in central Europe. Following the example of the Bolsheviks' successes in Russia, there was also a proletariat revolution in Hungary and in May 1919 the Communist regime of the Hungarian Soviet Republic was set up.

Despite the upheaval, the Republic nevertheless found time to form a committee for science and entertainment, which would also take charge of chess affairs and the popularisation of the game. In fact Breyer himself was included on this committee but, though discussions took place, there was no time to develop the programme because the Republic lasted only four months.

In this chaotic and violent period, Admiral Horthy then seized power and re-imposed a reactionary regime which was to last until the end of the Second World War.

The Communist 'Red Terror' was thus now followed by the 'White Terror'. Perhaps Breyer felt in fear of his life because of his earlier association with the fallen Republic and this was the reason why he migrated to Bratislava (formerly Pozsony but moved from Hungary to Czechoslovakia after the peace agreement following the First World War). Or perhaps it was just that he felt he would have better prospects of employment there than in Hungary, defeated in war.

Once settled in Czechoslovakia, the newly qualified Breyer established his own railway construction firm with a partner named Dávid, but unfortunately it did not provide the basis for making a living and he suffered ongoing financial hardship as well as ill health due to heart trouble, compounded by lung disease.

However, moving geographically closer to the chess centre of Vienna did enable him to obtain a chess column in the Hungarian left-wing daily paper *Bécsi Magyar Újság*, which he conducted from 25 December 1919 to 2 October 1921, providing much-needed income as well as a platform for expressing his original views on chess. He also made some money from his simultaneous and blindfold exhibitions as well as coffee-house games played at stakes.

■ ■ ■

Beset with personal problems, in the summer of 1920 Breyer came equal second to Réti in a short tournament in Vienna and then lost heavily to him in an equally short match. He then displayed lacklustre form in the first post-war international tournament in Gothenburg, Sweden, where uncharacteristically he made as many as nine draws and finished in the bottom half of the table. The winner was yet again Réti, who was now going from strength to strength and would effectively continue and further develop the pioneering work of Breyer after his death.

Nevertheless, after this series of poor results, at the end of the year Breyer recovered to give the best performance of his short competitive chess career. A tournament at Berlin, sponsored by the chess publisher Bernhard Kagan, took place at the well-known Kerkaupalast coffee-house with the following final scores:

Breyer 6½; Bogoljubow, Tartakower 5½; Réti 5; Maróczy, Mieses, Tarrasch 4½ Sämisch 3½; Leonhardt 3; Spielmann 2½.

Breyer wrote in *Bécsi Magyar Újság*: 'In Berlin, I myself don't know how I came first. With luck they say. As far as I know it is the good player that has the luck.' Then again, 'The writer's game is best characterised by a remark by Mieses and Bogoljubow, who gave an identical reply to enquirers of the possible outcome of their respective games for the Berlin tournament: "How you stand against Breyer you will only find out at the end of the game".'

'How you stand against Breyer you will only find out at the end of the game.'

But behind Breyer's great success lay great tragedy... 'He fought on the board with only one hand', writes Dr. Bertalan Wild – a physician and friend from Bratislava, himself a known chess player – 'with his other hand he was constantly checking his pulse, which in the last days was always 140! The excitement of the tournament exhausted him completely, and after the last round he suffered an asthmatic attack.'

On a postcard, which had been previously signed by all the masters, he said farewell to his young wife, 'I am dying, you are waiting for me as the winner, it is 11 o'clock at night and I am spitting blood...'

Yet in his newspaper column, Breyer was ecstatic: 'Gothenburg and Berlin signify the final triumph of the modern school! In few fields have the old ideas been so forcefully and thoroughly overthrown as in chess. In chess, proof is very simple: the result speaks for itself!' (Incidentally, the term '*Hyper*modern school' had not yet entered into popular chess

parlance and Breyer himself never used it.)

Breyer continued: 'Réti and Alekhine are the serious element. They are opportunists and the future is theirs. They like the open game but endeavour to bring this about mindful of the modern principles. Perhaps we have found a good metaphor when we say that the play of Bogoljubow, Nimzowitsch and Breyer in modern chess is trench warfare, while that of the latter two masters is the battle of the moving trench, the moving fortress and the tanks.

'The effectiveness of the new modern play is of course connected with the person who is the best chess player and thus with the title of World Champion. According to the above, at present it is Alekhine and Réti who can aspire most seriously to the title of world master. Lasker is studying, endeavouring to keep abreast of the times, but it is difficult to be born twice. Capablanca is not intelligent enough to be World Champion.'

■ ■ ■

It says so much for his character that Breyer carried on astonishing the chess world by beating Réti's 24-board blindfold simultaneous record, on 30 January 1921.

In an exhibition at Kassa, lasting 7 hours and 7 minutes, he scored +15 -3 =7, i.e. 74 per cent. And every game was published in the local newspaper!

Breyer wrote humbly afterwards: 'Blindfold play has no serious significance from the point of view of chess; it is only a *mnemo-technical* show serving the *popularisation* of chess.

'A chess event, which is resoundingly called world record breaking, can rightly expect the interest of the masses. After Pillsbury's 22 and Réti's 24 games, the latest attempt is 25 games. However, this performance can still be stepped up. A chess player can be a blindfold player if he possesses *visual* memory. This means that his memories present themselves *in pictures*. Thus the games actually take place on a board – in the head of the simultaneous player. The experienced chess player who can remember hundreds of positions is not particularly burdened by a further 25 positions.

Breyer died whilst exiled in Bratislava, but in 1987 his remains were returned to Budapest where he was buried with great dignity and honour in the National Pantheon.

'However, blindfold play has other difficulties. It is important that the performance should be completed *in a short time*. Mental work exhausts not by its intensity but by its duration. Another difficulty can arise if the positions are too *similar* to each other. The games must be grouped according to the opening moves, so as to become of completely differing character.'

■ ■ ■

Breyer's daughter was born in Budapest on 13 April 1921. His wife went home to give birth to the child and when she returned to Bratislava she left her in Budapest: it would not have been wise to take the little girl back to her sick husband and to poverty and she was brought up by relatives in Budapest, therefore her father only saw her when they took her to Bratislava once.

Breyer played in one last tournament at Vienna in May 1921. Here he finished third behind the young masters Sämisch and Euwe, but was honoured by the press as 'the most brilliant of all the competitors'.

Although the style of his newspaper columns remained cheerful and humoristic, Breyer's life was becoming desperate. A letter he wrote around this time reads: 'As to money, I do not have a penny, you know the state of my overcoat, so although it is winter outside I was obliged to walk about in a jacket. I caught a bad cold. Have no one to turn to. Ought to eat a lot. But where's the money? ... Yesterday I had no firewood but won 50 korona at chess so had some delivered ...'

In such strained circumstances, by September Breyer's health had deteriorated further and he had become an extremely sick man. His friend Dr. Vécsey took him to a football match, which he enjoyed greatly, but remembered: 'At this time I already perceived with a shock Gyula's *facies hippocraticat* (the facial expression of the dying). His half bowler had sunk to his forehead and his thin body was bent double. "Look after yourself, my Gyula", I said, to which he replied with a wry smile, "You have still a lot of time to live. I have to live three times as much as you because..." In November the same year, on a cold and frosty winter day, I was handed a telegram in the editorial office of my newspaper... Everything went black and my throat tightened... Gyula had died.'

At that time Breyer was given a modest burial in the old Jewish cemetery in Bratislava, but twenty years ago his descendants had his remains brought back to Budapest where he received an honorary grave in the cemetery on Imre Mezö Avenue, a national pantheon. Here, on 12 May 1987, he was laid to eternal rest beside two other world famous Hungarian chess players, Géza Maróczy and Rudolf Charousek. ■

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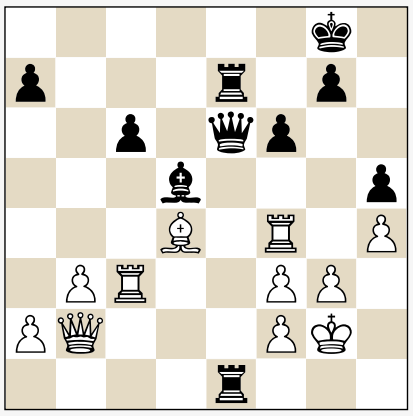
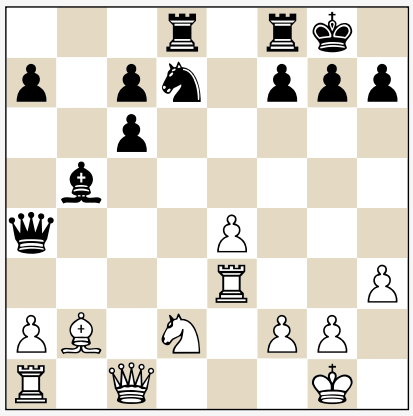
Find the best move in the positions below

Solutions on page 77



1. Black to move



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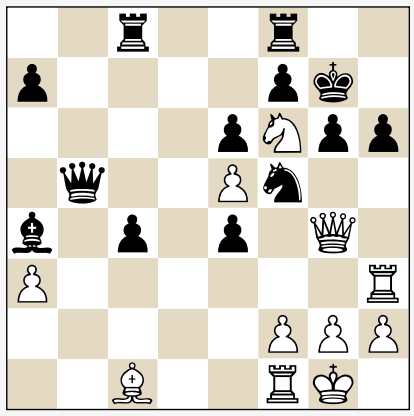

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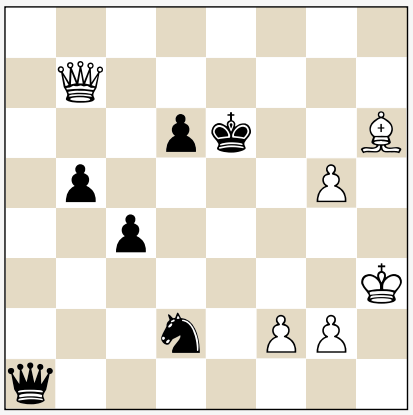
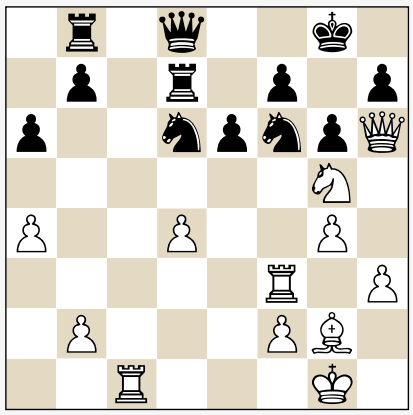
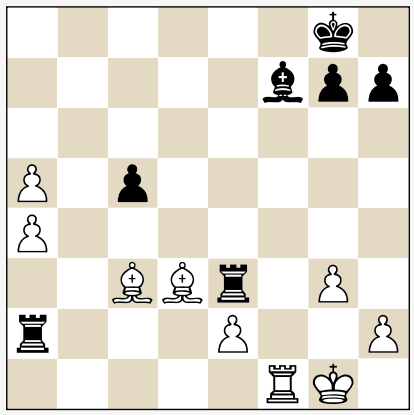


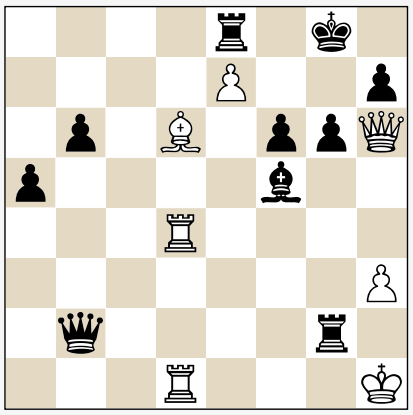
4. White to move



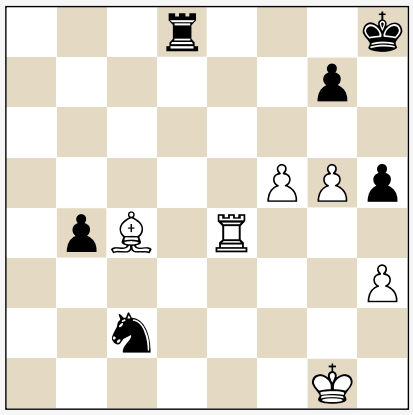
5. White to move



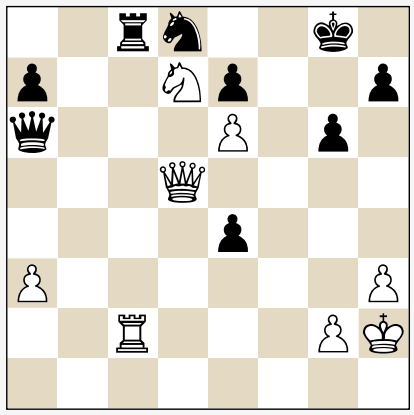
6. White to move



7. Black to move



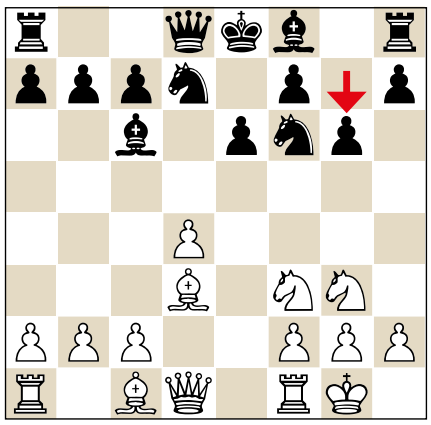
8. White to move



9. White to move

Jobava's twist to the Fort Knox

Jeroen Bosch



8...g6!?

'White should realize that if he plays 'slow' consolidating moves, Black will get a favourable version of the regular Fort Knox.'

In this issue we will investigate the so-called 'Fort Knox Variation' in the French, the reason being that Georgia's Number 1, Baadur Jobava, has been hiding his gold there recently. Now there is nothing new about the Fort Knox itself, which arises after

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♗d7

It is this bishop move, preparing to move it to the long diagonal, that is characteristic of the Fort Knox – 4...♗d7 was first played by Capablanca in a casual game in 1902. English IM Andrew Martin reportedly introduced the catchy name.

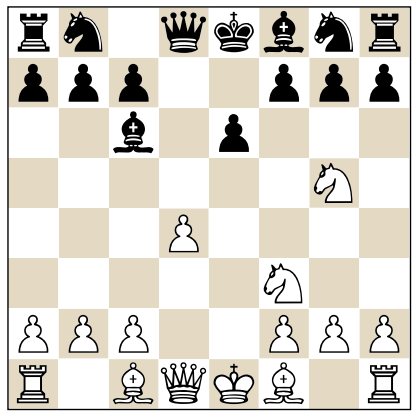
5.♘f3

This obvious developing move is the main line, and if we are to go into Jobava's idea in some detail, we have to cut down on the amount of existing theory. I will, however, point out a few basic ideas in this introduction.

A fair example of Black's strategy is Nunn-Karpov, Wijk aan Zee 1993: 5.c4 ♗c6 6.♘c3 ♘f6 7.♘f3 ♗xf3!? 8.♕xf3 c6 9.♗e3 ♘bd7 10.♗e2 ♗d6 11.0-0 0-0, with a typically solid position. Trading the light-squared bishop for a white knight and then continuing with ...c6 is actually why this line is called the Fort Knox – Black's position is supposedly as hard to crack as the place where America's strategic gold reserve is held.

5...♗c6 6.♗d3

Again this is the top choice, but you need to know how to answer the crude 6.♘eg5, when White is preparing to sac on f7.



■ No good is 6...h6? 7.♘xf7!.

■ 6...♗d6 was played by Karpov against Anand. However, 7.♘xf7!? is a pretty dangerous sacrifice here, too: 7...♔xf7 8.♘g5+ ♔e8 9.♘xe6!? ♕h4 (Genocchio-O.Foisor, Milan 2009) and now 10.♗d3!, when White has excellent compensation.

■ The safe choice is 6...♗e7 7.♗d3 ♘d7 8.♕e2 h6, and since neither taking on e6 nor capturing on f7 are anywhere near decisive, White has always withdrawn in practice, when after 9.♘e4 ♘gf6 Black has a very decent Rubinstein.

■ 6...♘d7 7.♘xf7 ♔xf7 8.♘g5+ ♔e8 9.♗d3 (Black was successful after 9.♗c4 ♗xg2 in Sörensen-Hillarp Persson, Denmark 2000. A forced draw may result after 9.♘xe6 ♕e7 10.♕e2 ♔f7 11.♘g5+ ♔e8=) 9...♕f6 10.0-0 ♗e7, and now White can certainly improve on 11.♘xh7?? ♕h4–+ Draganic-Saric, Bar 2015.

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However, it is unlikely that White has enough compensation for the piece.

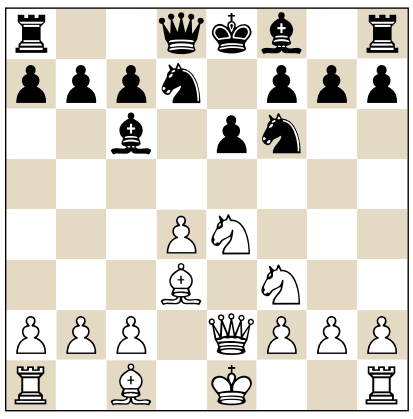
6...♘d7

Too acquiescent is 6...♗xe4?! 7.♗xe4 c6 8.0-0 ♘f6 9.♗d3 ♘bd7 10.c4 ♗d6 11.b3 0-0 12.♗b2, which is the oft-quoted game Spassky-O'Kelly, San Juan 1969. White has a slight but clear advantage. Generally speaking, if Black goes for this sort of position, he should make sure that he will be able to trade another pair of minor pieces. Cramped but solid would be an apt way to describe Black's position, but in my opinion you run the risk of not winning against a weaker opponent and not drawing against a stronger one. In short, not much fun and certainly not very SOS-like!

Worse is 6...♘f6? 7.♘xf6+ ♕xf6? 8.♗g5 ♗xf3 9.♕d2!, a well-known opening trap and the reason why Black prepares ...♘gf6 with 6...♘d7.

7.0-0

Or 7.♕e2 ♘gf6, and now:



■ 8.♘eg5 ♗xf3 (Black has gained time compared to the line starting with 6...♗xe4) 9.♘xf3 c5!? (Jobava won a blitz game with the solid 9...c6 10.0-0 ♗d6 11.c3 0-0 12.♗d2 ♕c7 13.♖fe1 ♗f4!, trading off another pair of minor pieces, Najer-Jobava, Sochi 2015) 10.0-0 cxd4 11.♘xd4 ♗c5 12.♘f3 ♕c7 13.♗g5 0-0 was a very tiny edge in a rapid blindfold game Gomez Esteban-Karpov, Santurtzi 2003.

■ 8.♗g5 ♗e7 9.0-0-0?! ♗xe4 10.♗xe4 ♘xe4 11.♗xe7 ♘c3! is a nice trick to remember. Black is up for preference already.

■ 8.0-0 ♘xe4 9.♗xe4 ♗xe4 10.♕xe4 c6. Compared to, say, the Caro-Kann or the Scandinavian, Black has an easy middlegame to look forward to. Karpov easily drew in J.Polgar-Karpov, Madrid 1992.

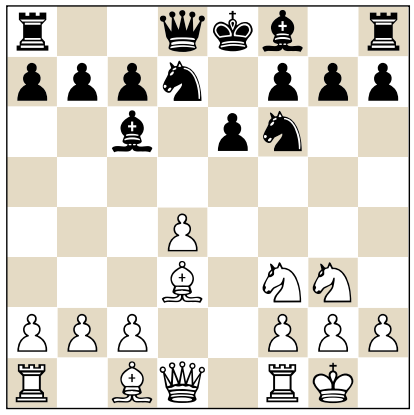
7...♘gf6

Black is developing quite harmoniously, and in the main line White quite rightly avoids the trade of minor pieces now with

8.♘g3

White can try to control square e5 with 8.♘ed2, but it doesn't mean much after 8...♗e7 9.♘c4 0-0 (there is also the ambitious 9...♗d5!?, intending ...c5) 10.♘a5 ♗d5 11.c4 ♗xf3 12.♕xf3 c6, when 13.♘xb7 ♕b6 14.♘c5 ♘xc5 15.dxc5 ♗xc5 looks fine for Black.

After 8.♘eg5 Black should play 8...♗d6 9.♖e1 h6 10.♘h3 (10.♖xe6+?! ♔f8!) 10...♗xf3, and now once again the typical 11.♕xf3 c6.



The usual move now is 8...♗e7 (more than 900 games in the database!), but White has his typical slight edge. For example: 9.♖e1 0-0 10.♕e2 b6 (10...♗xf3! 11.♕xf3, and here either 11...c6 or even 11...c5) 11.♗a6 ♖b8 12.c4 ♗b7 13.♗xb7 ♖xb7, and now 14.d5! is objectively best, but you could do worse than study the model game Karpov-Stojanovic, Valjevo 2007, which went 14.♘e5 ♕c8 15.♘c6 and ended in checkmate!

Instead, we are going to check out 8...g6, which was first played by Hillarp Persson in 2001, and later (repeatedly!) taken up by strong grandmasters like Rakhmanov, Pridorozhni, and Jobava. Developing the king's bishop to the long diagonal as well makes for an interesting twist, and enables Black to play for more than two results.

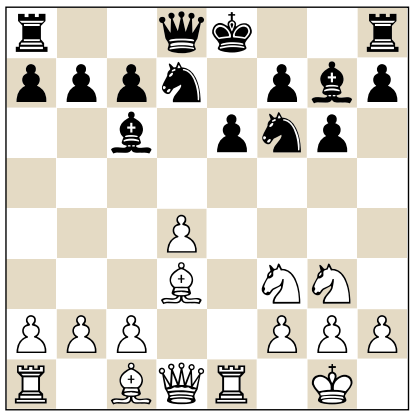
8...g6!?

Now White should realize that if he plays 'slow' consolidating moves, Black will get a favourable version of the regular Fort Knox. Black's king's bishop will put pressure on the d4-pawn. The pawn move ...g6 adds even more solidity to his light-squared fortress. And Black will often have the option of taking on f3 and playing ...c6, or of keeping the bishop with ... b6 to play for a subsequent ...c5. This should explain why there are only two serious options for refuting Black's set-up:

Variation I – 9.c4, intending a quick d4-d5, and **Variation II** – 9.b3, to prevent castling with 10.♗a3.

■ 9.♕e2 prepares 10.♘e5, which explains 9...♗xf3 10.♕xf3 c6 11.♖e1 ♗g7 12.h4?! 0-0 13.h5 (Djukic-Rakhmanov, Sarajevo 2014) and now 13...♘d5! 14.c3 c5.

■ 9.♖e1 ♗g7



Here the lines fork:

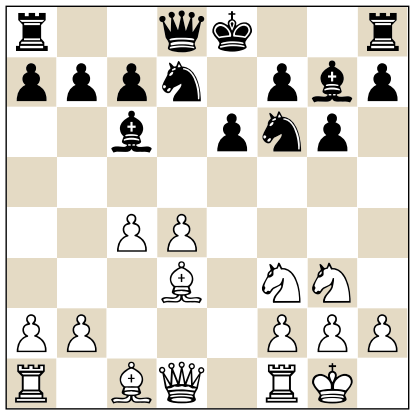
– 10.♗g5 0-0 11.♕e2 h6 12.♗d2 ♗xf3! 13.♕xf3 and now 13...c6 was in keeping with the Fort Knox (Rosen-Xiong, St. Louis 2015), but the active 13...c5! would have been stronger.

– 10.♗f4 0-0 11.c3 ♗xf3! 12.♕xf3 ♘d5! 13.♗c4 (the point of Black's play is revealed after Finkel's line 13.♗d2 c5! 14.dxc5 ♘e5 15.♕e2 ♘f4! 16.♗xf4 ♘xd3 17.♗d6 ♘xe1 18.♗xf8 ♕xf8 19.♖xe1 ♕xc5, and Black is well-placed) 13...♘xf4, with equal chances in Brynell-Hillarp Persson, Skara 2002.

– White has no time for 10.♘e5? in view of of 10...♘xe5 11.dxe5 ♕d5! 12.f3 ♘g4!.

Variation I – 9.c4

9.c4 ♗g7



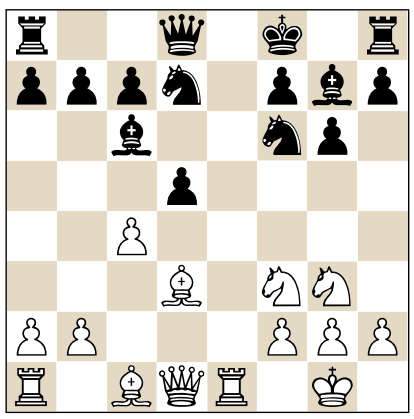
10.d5!?

This is the idea behind 9.c4: White grabs the initiative by means of this pawn sacrifice. Still, it's good to remember that Black's position has no weaknesses. The only thing White will have to show for his lost pawn is an edge in development.

The more solid 10.♗f4 0-0 11.♕e2 can be met by 11...b6!? 12.♖ad1 ♗b7 13.♖fe1 ♕c8, as played by Pridorozhni on two occasions, drawing both games without too much effort; or by the standard 11...♗xf3 12.♕xf3 c5 or 12...c6.

10...exd5 11.♖e1+ ♔f8

Black's king will keep the king's rook out of play for some time, but practical results suggest that White doesn't have anything much. Jobava in particular scored 2½ out of 3 from the diagram versus strong opposition.

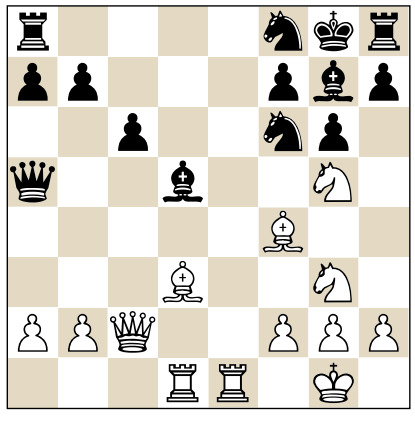


12.b3

This was suggested as a possible improvement by Daniel Gormally.

■ Instead, 12.♗e3 ♔g8 13.♖c1 h6 14.b4 dxc4 15.♗xc4 ♘b6 16.♗b3 ♗d5 yielded White enough for the pawn, but no advantage, Hübner-Wegerle, Germany 2013.

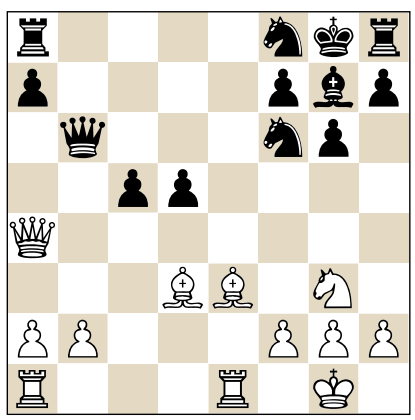
■ Kasimdzhanov-Jobava, Tashkent 2014, went 12.cxd5 ♗xd5 13.♕c2 c6 (13...♗xf3 14.gxf3 ♘d5 is a tempting alternative, but Jobava makes it look easy in the game) 14.♘g5 ♔g8 15.♗f4 ♘f8! 16.♖ad1 ♕a5



– 17.a3?! ♖d8 18.♗d2 ♕b6 19.♗e3 ♕c7 20.h3?! h6 21.♘5e4 ♘e6!, and Jobava had successfully soaked up all the pressure and was a sound pawn up.

– 17.♘3e4! ♘xe4 18.♗xe4 ♖d8 19.♗c7! ♕xc7 20.♗xd5 is a line that engines will throw out within seconds. After 20...♗f6 the line 21.♗xf7+ ♔g7 22.♘e6+ ♘xe6 23.♗xe6 draws.

■ 12.♘d4 ♔g8! 13.♕c2 (13.♗f4 ♘c5!; 13.♘xc6 bxc6 14.♕a4? ♘c5 demonstrates why Karjakin does not take on c6 till the next move: after the knight has gone to f8) 13...♘f8 14.♘xc6! bxc6 15.♕a4 ♕d6 16.cxd5 cxd5 17.♗f4 ♕b6 18.♗e3 c5

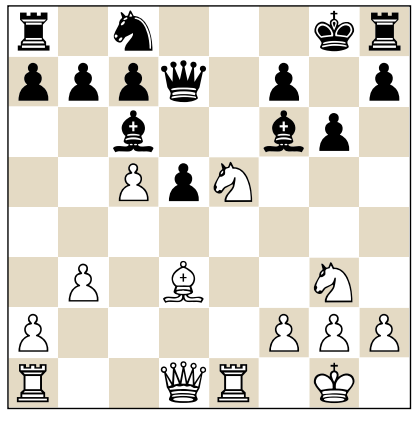


19.b4!? ♕xb4 20.♕c6 ♖e8 21.♕xc5 ♕xc5 22.♗xc5 ♘e6, and Black was slightly better in Karjakin-Jobava, Loo 2014. The problem for White is that 23.♗xa7?! can be met by 23...♖a8 24.♗e3 ♘g4.

12...♔g8 13.♗a3 ♘b6

The game is unclear after 13...h5!?, the idea being 14...h4 and 15...h3 to weaken White's kingside and to get the rook into the game: 14.♗e7 ♕c8 15.♘d4 h4!?.

14.♗e7 14.♘e5 is a more dangerous attempt here. **14...♕d7 15.♗xf6!? ♗xf6 16.c5 ♘c8 17.♘e5**

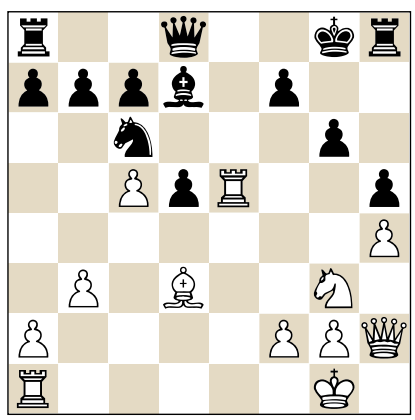


Like the notorious Goldfinger in the movie of the same name, Ter Sahakyan is making furious efforts to get at the gold (Black's king) hidden in Fort Knox. Indeed, White has gained some time, and both Jobava's rooks are out of it at the moment, and yet Black's Fort remains rock-solid.

17...♕d8 18.♕g4 ♗g7 19.h4?!

White should have tried to deploy all his pieces with 19.♖ad1, but there is still nothing concrete in sight.

19...h5! 20.♕h3?! That's no way to treat a lady. Jobava now coordinates his forces: **20...♘e7 21.♖e3 ♗xe5! 22.♖xe5 ♗d7 23.♕h2 ♘c6**



24.♖g5 Black wins the exchange after 24.♖xd5 ♘b4 25.♖d4 ♕f6. **24...♕f6 25.♖e1 ♖e8 26.♖xe8+ ♗xe8** Black is a sound pawn up, and about to grab the initiative as well. He won in Ter-Sahakyan-Jobava, Gjakova 2016.

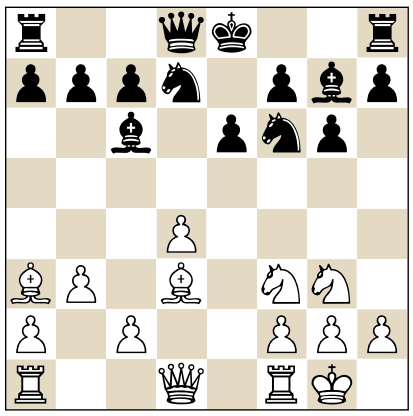
NEW IN CHESS TRAINING

Variation II – 9.b3

9.b3

This, I think, is the acid test for 8...g6. Rather than using brute force, White plays sound positional moves to prevent Black from castling kingside.

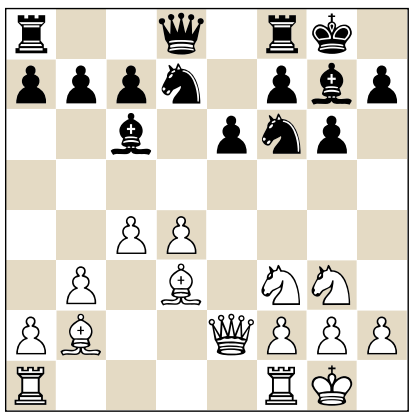
9...♗g7 10.♗a3!



This idea was first played by Nigel Short in 2010. Black can either give in and play 10...♗f8 or, like Jobava, aim for a Fort Knox by castling queenside. I have chosen the latter, riskier option, as our main line here.

10...♗xf3

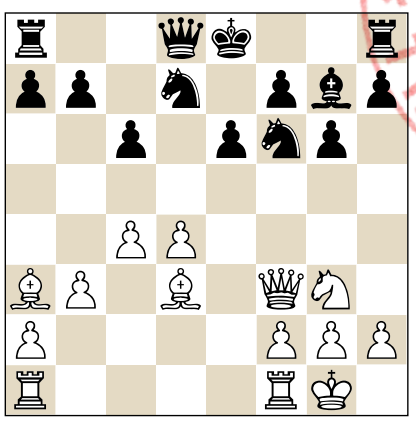
The alternative is 10...♗f8 11.♗b2 ♗g7. White has gained a tempo and has a slight edge here, although it may be difficult to achieve anything tangible. If he so wishes, White can force a repetition with 12.♗a3 ♗f8 or force Jobava's 12...♗xf3 if Black wants to continue. 12.c4 0-0 13.♕e2!?



and this position is easier to play for White.

I would conclude that 10...♗f8 is playable, but doesn't equalize. The choice between that move and 10...♗xf3 may be a matter of taste, though.

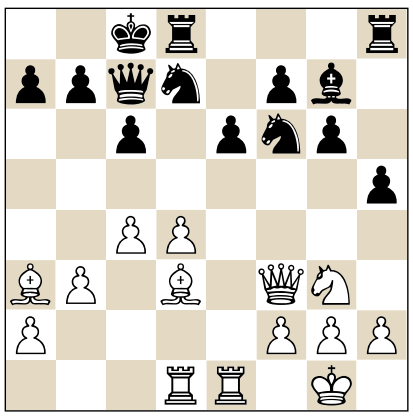
11.♕xf3 c6 12.c4



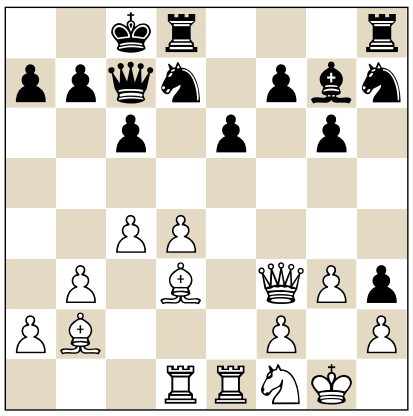
12...♕c7 13.♖fe1 0-0-0 14.♖ad1

Gormally's suggestion of 14.♗b2 ♔b8 15.a4 h5! 16.a5 h4 makes a lot of sense here. The position is sufficiently unclear to allow both sides to play for a win.

14...h5



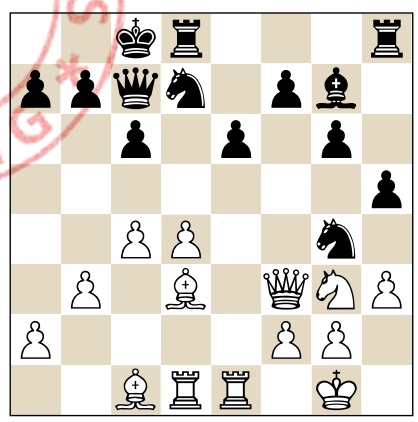
15.♗c1 The top choice of the engines. Practice has also seen 15.♗b2!? h4 16.♘f1, and now not 16...♖h5? (Hübner-Wegerle, Germany 2015), but 16...h3, when there is no denying that White keeps an edge with 17.g3, although Black has an excellent trick up his sleeve with 17...♘h7!?



when 18.♕xf7 is met by 18...♗xd4! 19.♗xd4 ♘g5, and Black definitely has compensation.

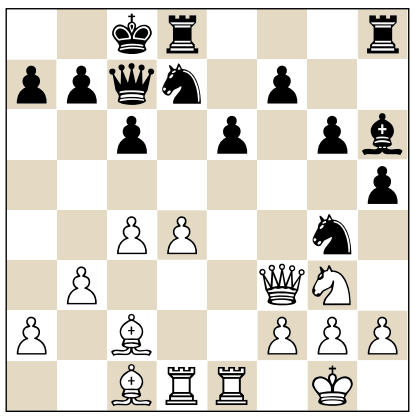
15...♘g4! 16.♗c2

The trick this time is 16.h3



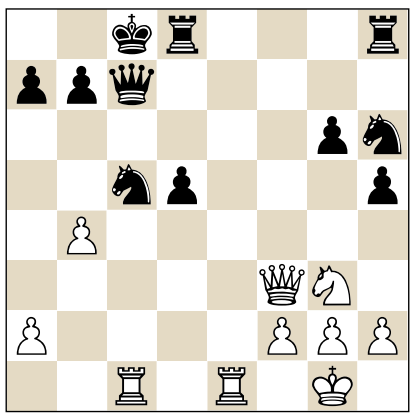
16...♗xd4! 17.hxg4 ♘e5 18.♖xe5 (18.♕e4 ♘xg4 19.♗e3 ♘xe3; 18.♕e2? ♘xg4) 18...hxg4 19.♕xg4 ♗xe5, with equality. Probably best is 16.♗e2!?.

16...♗h6



17.♗xh6 White may be forgiven for not allowing 17.♕xf7?! ♗xc1 18.♖xc1 ♖df8 19.♕xe6 ♕f4, when Black has huge counterplay against White's king.

17...♘xh6 18.d5!? Very sharp, but Jobava is undaunted. Objectively speaking, 18.♘e4 should maintain some edge. **18...exd5 19.cxd5 cxd5 20.♗xg6!?** Or 20.♕xd5 ♔b8. **20...fxg6 21.♖c1 ♘c5 22.b4**



This may look scary, but the endgame after **22...♖hf8 23.♕e3 ♘g4 24.♕xc5 ♕xc5 25.♖xc5+ ♔b8** was equal in Solak-Jobava, Tromsø 2014. ■

Judit Polgar

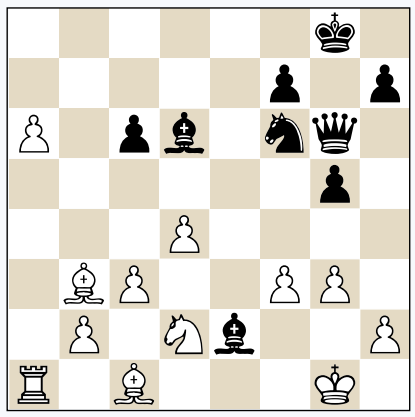
A chess player's best friend?

We all use computers these days, but preparing with an engine doesn't always lead to a path strewn with roses, as **JUDIT POLGAR** knows from experience.

Even for those born and raised in the classical era, computer preparation has become a daily routine. Many of us would perhaps gladly do without, but the constant fear that our opponents examine our repertoire in detail with engines practically forces us to do the same. Theoretical duels more and more tend to become clashes between computers and analysing programs. Still, sometimes relying on the engines' evaluation can lead to bitter disappointment.

There are openings that are perfectly suited for computer-assisted analysis, but there are others in which this should be done with care. One of the reasons why the Marshall Attack became so popular and successful is that trying to refute it by using engines can turn against White like a boomerang.

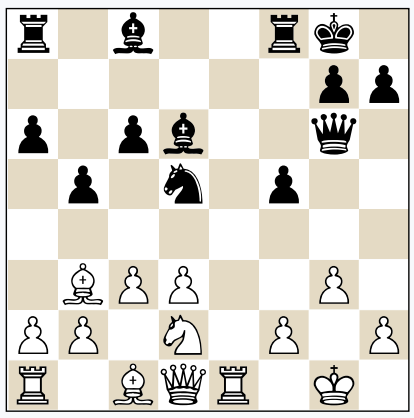
The most famous example is the eighth game of the Brissago World Championship match:



Kramnik-Leko
Brissago World Championship 2004 (8)
position after 25.bxa6

Kramnik's seconds had analysed up to this moment, reaching the conclusion that White is winning, but they had switched off the engines too early. Much to his merit, caught unawares and with little time left on his clock, Leko won convincingly: **25...♕d3 26.♔f2 ♗xf3 27.♘xf3 ♘e4+ 28.♔e1 ♘xc3 29.bxc3 ♕xc3+ 30.♔f2 ♕xa1 31.a7 h6 32.h4 g4** 0-1.

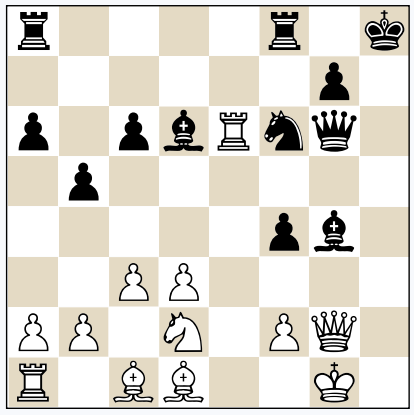
To me this gave a déjà vu feeling, as five years earlier I had fallen into a similar trap in the same opening.



Polgar-Adams
Dos Hermanas 1999
position after 17...f5

I knew that playing for a win against such an outstanding Marshall specialist as Mickey was a hard task, but I remember how happy I was during my morning preparation when designing a new move and working out several promising lines, hoping to catch my opponent in one of them.

18.♕f3!? In a previous game against Anand in the same tournament, Adams had little trouble reaching a draw after 18.a4. As our game advanced, I became increasingly excited as for seven moves we followed one of the main lines of my analysis. **18...♔h8 19.♗d1 f4 20.g4 h5 21.h3 ♘f6 22.♕g2 hxg4 23.hxg4 ♗xg4 24.♖e6**

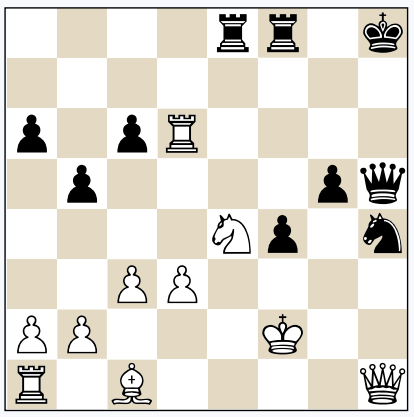


This was the end of my analysis. The double threat 25.♖xd6 and 25.♖xf6 wins a piece and the computer evaluated the position around +2. Modern engines are more restrained, offering something close to +1.

I could not believe my luck that I was about to win the game practically without making a single important move by myself. And my opponent's red face boosted my optimism. But Adams is a great fighter and he kept playing the best moves, ensuring Black entirely adequate compensation for the piece.

Had I not have been biased by the computer evaluation, I might have felt the danger, especially as I am an attacking player myself, but during the game I could not free myself of

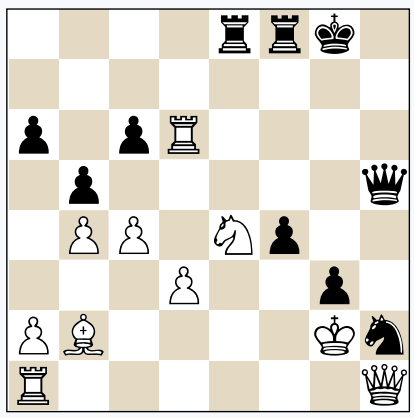
the thought that the position is simply winning.
24...♕h5! 25.♗xg4 If 25.♖xf6 ♗xd1 26.♖xd6 ♖ae8 offers Black a decisive attack. **25...♘xg4 26.♖xd6 ♖ae8 27.♘e4 ♘e5** By now I was psychologically ready to allow a perpetual with ...♘f3+ and ...♘h2+, but then I realized it was not easy to make a useful move! **28.f3** But when I played this I once again thought that I could play for a win! I rejected 28.♗d2 ♘f3+ 29.♔f1 because of 29...♘xd2+!? 30.♘xd2 f3. **28...♘xf3+ 29.♔f2 ♘h4 30.♕h1 g5!**



I underestimated this great attacking move, thinking that I should be able to punish the weakening of Black's castle. **31.b4?** The decisive mistake, wasting an important tempo.
Now was a good moment to forget

'I could not believe my luck that I was about to win without making a single move by myself.'

about my ambitions and more or less force a draw with 31.♗d2 g4 32.♔g1!. Black has nothing better than a draw by perpetual with ...♘f3-h4, immediately or, say, after 32...g3 33.♘xg3! (based on 33...fxg3 34.♖h6+) 33...♘f3+.
As becomes clear later, even 31.b3 would have been safer than my last move.
31...g4 32.♗b2 g3+ 33.♔g1 ♘f3+ 34.♔g2 I was expecting a perpetual already, but completely blundered Mickey's next move. **34...♘h2!** Suddenly White is in trouble. **35.c4+ ♔g8**

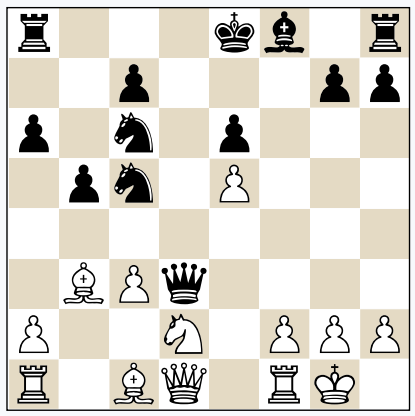


BEREND VONK

By now I was running low on time and my next move was an open invitation to a decisive attack. **36.♕d1?** But I would not have solved my problems with 36.♔g1 either, since after 36...bxc4 the knight would become unstable. For instance 37.♖d7 ♖f5 or 37.dxc4 ♕e2. Here we see why 31.b3 would have been more solid, possibly leading to a perpetual. **36...f3+!** During the final sequence I would have gladly changed places with Mickey. **37.♔xg3 ♕g4+ 38.♔f2 ♕h4+ 39.♔e3 ♕f4+ 40.♔d4 ♕e5+ 41.♔e3 ♘g4+ 42.♔d2 ♕xb2+ 43.♕c2 ♕xa1 44.♖g6+ ♔h7 45.♖xg4 f2** 0-1.

I confess that I learned a clear lesson from this game and never trusted engines blindly again!

But not all openings are as tough to handle with engines as the Marshall Attack. Traditionally considered an interesting way to create counterchances for Black, the Open Spanish started becoming a comfortable analytical target once the computers acquired a certain strength. The first warning came in the tenth game of another World Championship match.

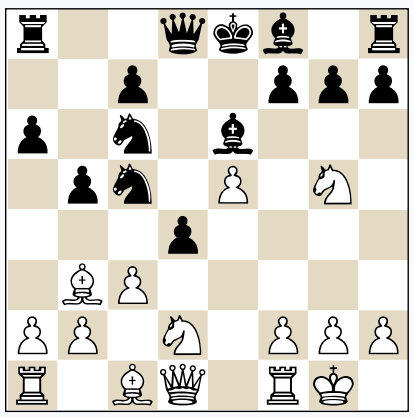


Kasparov-Anand
New York PCA WC match 1995 (10)
position after 13...♕d3

Anand had little trouble defending this position in the sixth game, but in the meantime Kasparov had used his computer to work out a killing analysis: **14.♗c2!! ♕xc3 15.♘b3 ♘xb3 16.♗xb3 ♘d4 17.♕g4 ♕xa1 18.♗xe6 ♖d8 19.♗h6!!** The

final touch. Kasparov won convincingly, levelling the score in the match and taking Anand off balance for the remaining games.

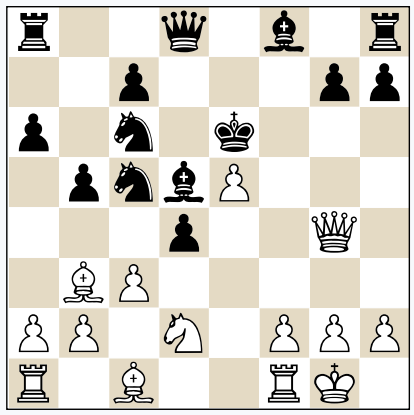
I also had my bright engine preparation experience against the Open Spanish, seven years later:



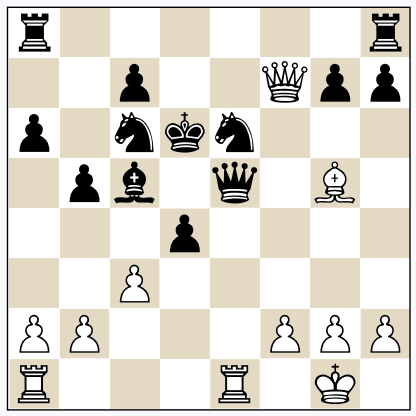
Polgar-Mamedyarov
Bled Olympiad 2002
position after 11.♘g5

It is worth mentioning that the spectacular 11.♘g5 stems from long before the computer era. The originator of the idea was Igor Zaitsev and it was first tried by Karpov in the 12th game of the Baguio World Championship match against Kortchnoi.

11...♗d5 Up to this moment Mamedyarov had played very quickly, but when I saw his last move I was overcome by the familiar feeling that it could not be true that I was so lucky to trap my opponent in my preparation. Still, my previous experience with Adams made me display some caution. 11...dxc3 was practically abandoned after Kasparov-Anand, but 11...♕xg5 is the main line. **12.♘xf7!** This had been played before, but the conclusions from previous games were far from clear. **12...♔xf7 13.♕f3+ ♔e6 14.♕g4+**



14...♔f7? Once again played quickly. 14...♔e7 is better, even though after 15.e6 Black soon landed in trouble in Svidler-Anand, Dos Hermanas 1999. **15.♕f5+** I spent ten minutes before playing this strong move, in order to convince myself of the fact that after allowing the devastating sacrifice, Mamedyarov had also chosen the worst defence. **15...♔e7** Or if 15...♔g8 16.e6!. **16.e6!** I had ended my analysis with this move. By coincidence, it also occupies the e6-square, just like the final move of my preparation against Adams, but the circumstances are quite different.
Mamedyarov must have finally understood the seriousness of his situation as he answered after more than half an hour.
16...♗xe6 17.♖e1! More ambitious than retrieving the piece with 17.♕xc5+, which of course also wins. **17...♕d6 18.♗xe6 ♘xe6 19.♘e4 ♕e5 20.♗g5+! ♔d7 21.♘c5+! ♗xc5 22.♕f7+!** Even better than 22.♖xe5. **22...♔d6**



23.♗e7+! The only winning move. If 23...♔d5 24.♕f3+ ♔c4 25.b3 mate, so: 1-0. ■

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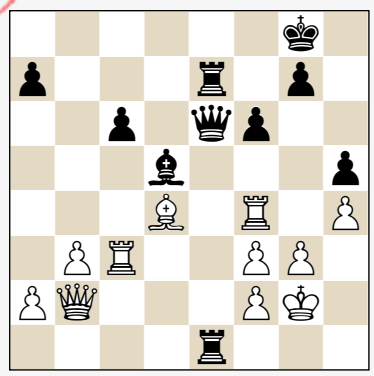
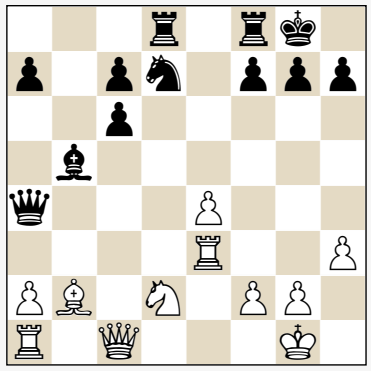


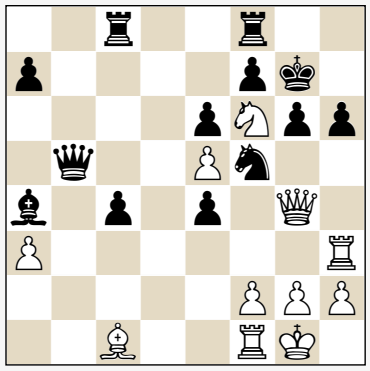
1. Ibrahim-M.Nikolov
Achaea 2016

41...♖h1! White resigned in view of 42.♔xh1 (42.g4 ♕e1) 42...♕h3+ 43.♔g1 ♖e1 mate.



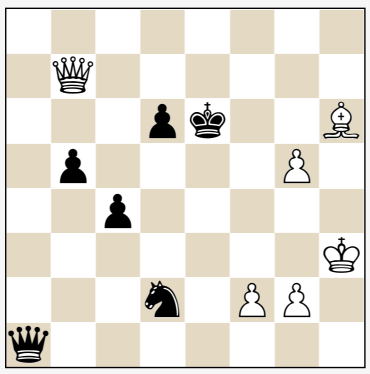
2. Le Quang Liem-Kazhgaleyev
Tashkent 2016

21.♗xg7! ♔xg7 22.♕b2+ f6 23.♖g3+ Or immediately 23.♖a3. **23...♔h8 24.♖a3** The queen is trapped and White went on to win.



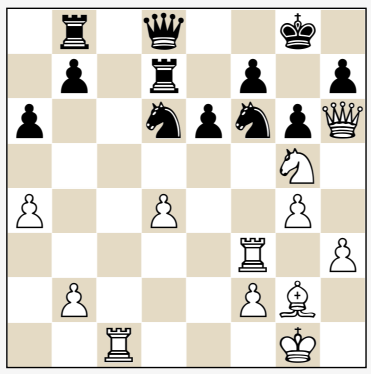
3. Nesteretz-S.Pavlov
Mukachevo 2016

27.♕xf5! gxf5 28.♖g3+ ♔h8 29.♗xh6 ♖g8 30.♗g7+! Delivering checkmate after 30...♖xg7 31.♖h3+. Black resigned.



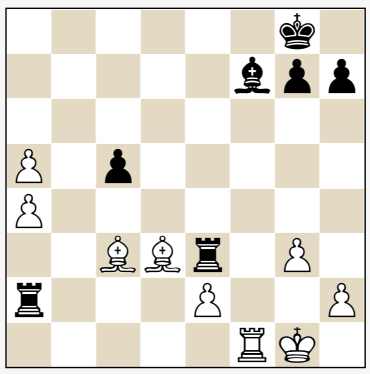
4. Gabrielian-Esipenko
Kolomna 2016

48.g6! ♕h1+ Black's last reasonable check. **49.♔g4 ♕xh6 50.♕h7!** Promoting the pawn after both the exchange of queens or 50...♕f8 51.g7. Black resigned.



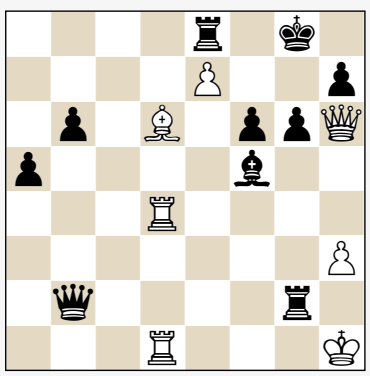
5. T.Petrosian-Shimanov
Chicago 2016

34.♖xf6 ♕xf6 35.♕xh7+ ♔f8 36.♘xe6+! ♔e7!? If 36...fxe6 37.♕xd7 or 36...♕xe6 37.♕h8+ ♔e7 38.♕xb8 White is two pawns up. **37.♖e1! ♘e4 38.♖xe4 ♔d6 39.g5 ♕f5 40.♕h4** Black resigned.



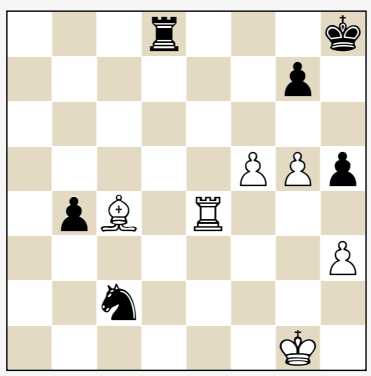
6. Bj.Thorfinnsson-Jensson
Reykjavik 2016

35.♖xf7! ♔xf7 35...♖xd3 36.♖xg7+ ♔f8 37.exd3. **36.♗c4+ ♔e7 37.♗xa2 ♖xc3 38.a6 ♖a3** 38...♖c1+ 39.♔f2 ♖d1 40.a7 ♖d8 41.♗d5 doesn't help either. **39.♗b3! c4 40.♗c2 ♖a1+ 41.♔f2** Black resigned.



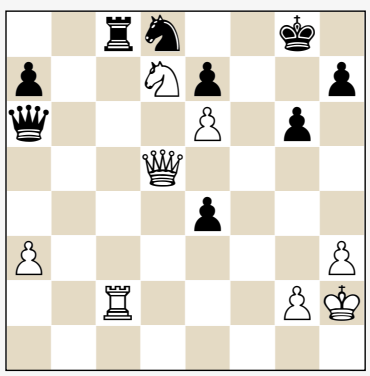
7. Hambleton-Sukandar
St.Louis 2016

34...♖xe7! 35.♗e5!? Keeping control of the h2-square and at the same time creating serious counter-threats. **35...♖d7!** This excellent move seals White's fate. **36.♖xd7 ♖h2+!** White resigned in view of 37.♗xh2 ♗e4+ 38.♔g1 ♕g2 mate.



8. Navara-Bartel
Lublin 2016

37.g6 ♘d4 The threat was 38.♖h4. **38.f6! ♘f3+** 38...gxf6 39.♖e7 ♘f3+ 40.♔f2 ♘g5 loses to 41.g7+. **39.♔f2 ♘d2 40.♖e7! ♘xc4 41.f7** Creating new and decisive threats. **41...♘d6 42.♖e6** Black resigned. 42.♖e5 would do as well.



9. Navara-Kanellopoulos
Achaea 2016

33.♘f6+! exf6 33...♔g7 34.♕d7! ♖xc2 35.♕xe7+ ♔h6 36.♕f8+ ♔g5 37.♘xh7+ ♔h5 38.♘f6+ ♔g5 39.♘xe4+ ♔h5 40.♕h8 mate. **34.e7+ ♘e6** If 34...♘f7 then again 35.♕d7! ♖b8 36.♖c6! and 37.♖c8+ wins. But now: **35.♖c6!!** Black resigned.

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave was on fire at the 44th Dortmund Sparkassen Chess Meeting, winning four games and drawing three. As in the past two years the venue was the NRW Orchestra Centre, where the games were played on the stage of the auditorium.

LENNART OOTES

The winner with two names

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave shoots up to second place in world rankings

No, it wasn't Fabiano Caruana, the star of the previous two editions. And no, it wasn't 10-time winner Vladimir Kramnik, either. No, the undisputed number one was Maxime Vachier-Lagrave. In his Dortmund debut, the Frenchman finished one and a half points ahead of his rivals (in only 7 rounds!). **MACAULEY PETERSON** watched the finale and checked up on the chess tradition in Germany's 8th largest city.

LENNART OOTES

As you stroll the streets of the old centre of Dortmund, don't be surprised if you come across a winged rhinoceros or two. The rhino is apparently regarded as 'a source of inspiration for intellectual flights of fancy', and the 'Do-Rhino', as it's known (Do- for Dortmund), is a symbol of the Westphalian Philharmonic – the city's concert house.

For the past decade, a hundred sculptures of the creature, each two and a half meters in length, have inhabited this 1100-year-old Hanseatic city.

Yet for longevity, that quixotic project has nothing on the Sparkassen Chess Meeting, which celebrated its 44th year, the third year in its recent home at the 'Orchesterzentrum NRW', which is just a stone's throw from the concert house on Dortmund's Brückstrasse.

It's hard to think of Maxime Vachier-Lagrave as a 'newcomer', but remarkably this was the Frenchman's first visit as a player to Dortmund. This year he is certainly a 'comer' more

broadly speaking, and in the midst of a career breakthrough.

Maxime played rapidly and gave the impression that he was confidently prepared in the opening. He explained after the final round, 'I felt in shape and I felt that I was calculating quite sharply and of course that's also why I decided to play faster and to spend less time to check my calculations because it seemed quite accurate.' But he noted appearances can be deceiving, pointing especially to the first-round win against Caruana.

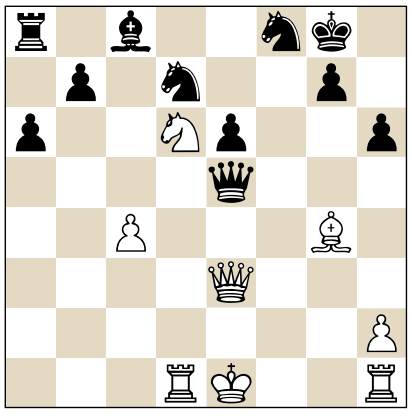
'I got out-prepared by Fabiano and basically messed it up a little bit in that game and was in some trouble. But what helped me also is that I played the Najdorf my whole life and am quite familiar with the active ideas – the ideas to get active counterplay.'

Nevertheless the early win with Black – which Maxime annotates in the following pages – against the main favourite proved crucial in this short seven-rounder. 'MVL' took the sole lead in Round 4 and never looked back, scoring the full point in three straight games to clinch tournament victory.

He left ten-time Dortmund winner Vladimir Kramnik to fight for second along with Caruana and Cuba's Leinier Dominguez. In the process Maxime passed both Kramnik *and* Caruana in the live ratings to move to number two in the world.

Mr. Dortmund

Kramnik edged into the three-way tie for second place – a whopping point and a half behind – with a last-round win over Evgeny Najer. The experienced open tournament veteran Najer, who qualified for Dortmund via the now-traditional spot reserved for the winner of the Aeroflot Open in Moscow, had no 'concrete expectations' – as he put it – playing in his first ever super-tournament. Despite his disappointing score of 2 out of 7, he felt things were going fine, until a serious accident in Round 5, when he became Vachier-Lagrave's third victim.



Najer-Vachier-Lagrave
Dortmund 2016 (5)
position after 26...♕e5

White has no less than five viable ways of dealing with the threat to his queen, but **27.♖d3**, sadly, was not one of them. After the straightforward tactic **27...♘c5**, the rook is overloaded, and Najer had no compensation for the resulting lost exchange.

On the adjacent board, Kramnik played Caruana to bare kings after six and a half hours, with the Russian angry at himself for letting go of a position in a double-rook ending he later described as 'clearly just technically winning'.

This year Kramnik never threatened to claim an eleventh title, and even participating was a struggle, as he has been suffering from serious chronic back pain for months that has become severe enough to even disrupt his sleep.

'I'm taking these pills every day before games just to stop the pain. It's not funny. So of course energetically I was really low here. The same story was in Paris and Leuven as well... in general my level of play was surprisingly good for me considering the circumstances.'

The same problem plagued Kramnik ten years ago, when it was truly debilitating – much worse than now, he says. This recent bout started in March and affected him during Norway Chess in Stavanger. He has tried several therapies but nothing has really worked well so far. (A few weeks after Dortmund Kramnik decided to take a break to undergo treatment and cancelled his participation in the Sinquefield Cup in St. Louis – ed.)

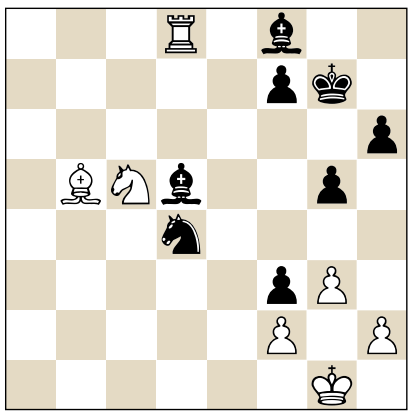
MACAULEY PETERSON

The players get a double introduction. First they are called to the stage by organizer Gerd Kolbe (left), next they are presented to the audience by tournament director Stefan Koth.

At the start of each round the players are introduced twice, first by organizer Gerd Kolbe, who summons them individually to the stage with a general introduction, followed by audience applause. Kramnik is ceremonially called up last regardless of his board or score, and in the final round he received a noticeable crescendo of cheers from the half-filled theatre.

If conserving energy was a priority, Kramnik didn't show it, as he toiled for 14 hours at the board in Rounds 5 and 6, only to settle for his fifth and sixth draws. The latter – with Nisipeanu – was seven and a half hours thanks to Dortmund's long time control and the fact that the game stretched to 146 moves!

Said Kramnik: 'It was also quite bad luck, because first of all I had to make an important decision on move 40 exactly.'



Nisipeanu-Kramnik
Dortmund 2016 (6)
position after 40.♗b5

'If it had been move 41, I would have calculated ♘e2 check (instead of 40...♘xb5, as he played in the game – ed.) and then I get the same endgame with two bishops against rook, which is quite a serious winning chance.' 40...♘e2+ 41.♔f1 ♗e6 42.♗xe2 fxe2 43.♔xe2 ♗xc5.

'I mean it's completely accidental, but it's maybe the only set-up where he holds the draw easily with h2, g3, f2.'

'The only way to win such positions when you see there is no clear win is to just manoeuvre around. That's Karpov-style – you just move a lot – move around and then the opponent starts to misunderstand what's going on.'

Dortmund traditions are slow to change

Many tournaments of all sizes, formats, rating classes and budgets are moving to embrace live online broadcasting of games, often including live video. Among super-GM tournaments an engaging web presence is now *de rigueur* as the events look to connect with larger international audiences. Sometimes this is sponsor-driven, but more often it's simply a question of prestige, trying to elevate a tournament's status – and that of chess as a whole – in the public consciousness.

Dortmund stands out among its peers as having never offered *any* online live commentary in any language. *[Full disclosure: I've personally offered to provide such commentary webcast services, both as a freelancer, and as the Content Director of chess24 in past years, though not in 2016.]*

The Tournament Director, Stefan Koth, when asked about this conspicuous omission, explained that the principal aim is to encourage in-person attendance at the venue.

'We think that the spectators must pay 6 euro for a round here, and we give them live commentary, air conditioning, a good atmosphere. And on the Internet it is free, so we give only the moves.'

This charmingly parochial view disregards the fact that the 2,000 or so spectators they estimate attended this year (less than 300 per round) is dwarfed by an online audience in the hundreds of thousands, most of whom reside outside of Germany, let alone the region of North Rhine-Westphalia. If the 12,000 euro or so in spectator revenue were really a concern, a live webcast could easily be geoblocked to prevent local viewership (not to say this would be a good idea!).

Koth is avowedly more concerned with attracting local and regional TV & radio than with an international audience, and fears that local media might be discouraged from visiting the tournament if any multimedia content – even such basics as video interviews with the players – were provided on the official web site.

Meanwhile, the principal sponsor, the regional bank Dortmund Sparkasse, has no pressing interest for international exposure or recognition, and therefore the status quo is just fine with them.

The tournament also retains, year after year, a rather pointless implementation of the 15-minute delay in the live games transmission – ostensibly as an anti-cheating measure, although not accompanied by any stringent complementary controls.

In Dortmund it is even not possible to follow the live moves in the press room

Live game delay is generally regarded as unnecessary and disruptive by organizers of comparable elite events like Tata Steel Chess, the Grand Chess Tour, and Norway Chess, and is therefore not used.

Koth evidently is a believer in the efficacy of the delay rule, however, and curiously cited the example of the 2015 European Women's Championship, where suspicions were raised about the performance of Romanian WGM Mihaela Sandu by over a dozen of her peers.

The accusations against Sandu were widely derided by grandmasters and the organizers themselves and there's little reason to think that the 15-minute delay did anything to protect the integrity of the event.

In Dortmund it is even not possible to follow the live moves in the press room at the venue, which is one reason why it was scarcely populated by journalists and primarily used as an office for tournament staff, in stark contrast to the press centres at similar events elsewhere.

But while New In Chess has pointed out the incongruities of some of Dortmund's traditions before, the organizers show no sign of changing with the times.

'I think we stay so,' Koth concludes. 'We do it like every year in Dortmund.' *(MP)* ■

NEW IN CHESS

Little rest for Ruslan Ponomariov! The day after Dortmund he returned home to Bilbao and to his wife Inés and their new-born son Yaroslav.

Indeed, watching this game from the live commentary booth, Leinier Dominguez observed a similarity with a Karpov win in Bugojno (then Yugoslavia) in 1980 over Jan Timman where Karpov had Black but the advantage of weaker white pawns to target.

There was some mild grumbling from the organizers at the lengths Kramnik was prepared to go to, but he brushed them off.

'When I have chances to win I try until the end. It's normal. You know when Magnus is doing it – and he's doing it *always* – everybody says it is great. And if somebody else tries then it's like you're trying to squeeze something from nothing. *No*, you just try to win!'

Finally succeeding in winning a game in the last round provided some measure of relief. It was Najer's first competitive game against Kramnik, but curiously it wasn't his *only* game against the former World Champ, as he related the evening before to the live audience at the venue.

'Vladimir probably doesn't remember the first', which Najer explained was played in a simul circa 1992, when he was a young teenager. 'He crushed me.'

Indeed, Kramnik didn't recall the encounter but was amused to learn this detail. In the same year Kramnik made his *first* appearance in Dortmund when he played the open tournament which runs parallel to the classical grandmaster event.

'When Magnus is doing it – and he's doing it always – everybody says it is great. And if somebody else tries then it's like you're trying to squeeze something from nothing.'

'Mr. Dortmund', as he came to be known, has what amounts to a standing invitation to the tournament, now extended to 2017. In fact, next July's Sparkassen Chess Meeting shall even be named in his honour marking twenty-five years since this first visit, which – as if by some Caissaic contrivance – was also the year that Garry Kasparov participated in *his only* Dortmund tournament (which he won).

Fabiano Caruana has been invited every year since 2012, and won on three occasions, but he never closed the gap with MVL this time around.

'If you lose with White in the first round it's very hard to get back.'

Leinier Dominguez, despite being a super tournament veteran at age 32, had never played in Dortmund before.

His win over Ruslan Ponomariov was the highlight for him, when he nursed a slight endgame advantage for some 40 moves before shaking loose a passed pawn for the win.

Dominguez now has the rest of the summer off before heading to Baku with his Cuban teammates for the Olympiad.

There was no rest in store for Ruslan Ponomariov, however! The day after the tournament wrapped he returned home to Bilbao, Spain, and to his baby boy named Yaroslav just a month old. His son was born well past his due date such that Ruslan had time to play in the Eurasian Blitz Cup in Almaty, Kazakhstan, and still make it back for the birth. In fact, he got the call that his wife Inés was heading to the hospital while in transit home via Amsterdam! Fortunately he was rarely in such time-pressure during his Dortmund games.

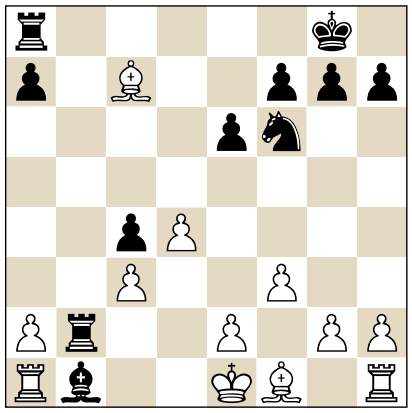
Ponomariov wasn't in a particularly fighting mood in the last round, and played into a repetition against Caruana after just 18 moves, but after losing to Vachier-Lagrave in Round 6, there was little to play for. There is no prize-money in Dortmund, only undisclosed appearance fees.

Ponomariov cites a lack of activity, more than new fatherhood, as an obstacle to chess progress at the moment. Tournaments of this calibre are few and far between for him these days, and he explained there's a bit of a Catch-22 at work in this respect.

'For these invites you need to have a higher rating; for a higher rating you need to play.' Like Dominguez he expects his next chance to compete

will not come until the Olympiad. With an even score (two wins, two losses) Ponomariov gained just shy of 3 points in Dortmund, but the 32-year-old is now on the brink of dropping out of the Top 40 for the first time since winning the FIDE World Championship in 2000.

The other player finishing even was Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu, who came to it from another route: seven draws. After the patient defence against Kramnik in Round 6, there were no heroics in his last-round effort against cellar dweller Rainer Buhmann. But there was one decidedly cute moment:



Buhmann-Nisipeanu
Dortmund 2016 (7)
position after 14...♗b1!?

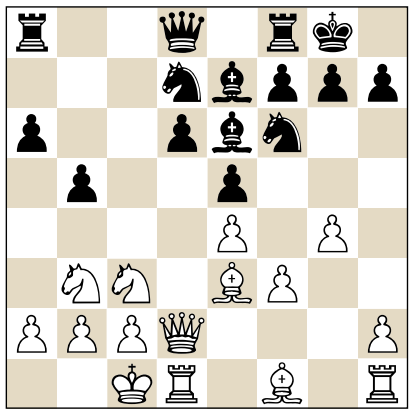
Now Buhmann decided that the best way to cope with the impending black knight's arrival on d5 with tempo was to march his king to the queenside. **15.♔d1 ♘d5 16.♔c1 ♖xa2 17.♖xb1 ♘xc7** and the position remained close to equal until the players reached a repetition draw on move 27.

Buhmann was not expecting much given his massive underdog status, but he was proud to hold a draw against Kramnik in what is surely an instant classic, a game that briefly stole the limelight in Round 3, which Vladimir annotates further on. But we start with the key game from Round 1, MVL's win over last year's winner Caruana that set the grandmaster from Paris going.

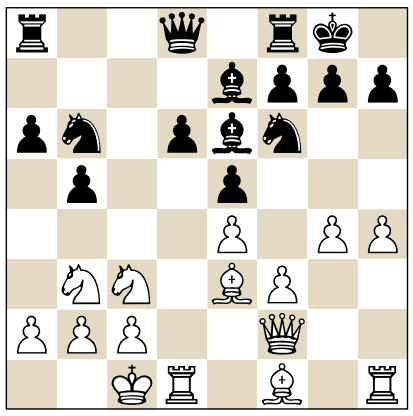
NOTES BY
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave

SI 14.1 – B90
Fabiano Caruana
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave
Dortmund 2016 (1)

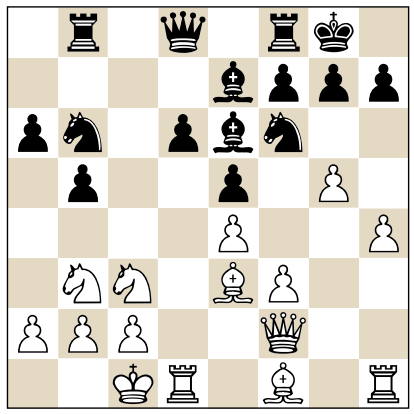
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.f3 e5 7.♘b3 ♗e7 8.♗e3 ♗e6 9.♕d2 0-0 10.0-0-0 ♘bd7 11.g4 b5



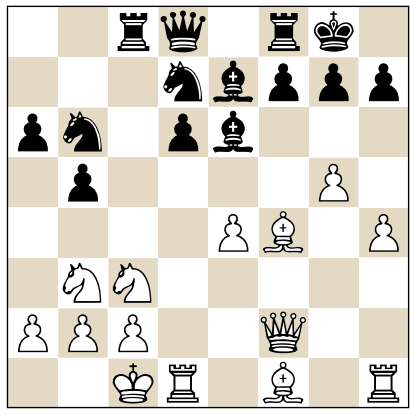
12.h4 A fresh idea that I had failed to consider properly at home.
12.g5 and 12.♖g1 are the main lines.
12.a3 was Fabiano's try against me in a recent online blitz match.
12...♘b6 13.♕f2



13...♖b8
This is inaccurate. A couple of moves later, I was annoyed that I hadn't replied 13...♘fd7 at once.
After 13...♘c4, 14.♗g5 (14.♗xc4 bxc4 15.♘c5 ♕c7 might have been Fabiano's idea, but it looks rather unclear to me) worried me, possibly for no good reason: 14...♕c7 15.♗xf6 ♗xf6 16.♘d5 ♗xd5 17.♖xd5 ♖ab8 18.g5 ♗e7, and it seems I will be in time to launch strong counterplay on the queenside.
14.g5



14...♘fd7?
14...♘h5 was my original intention and the reason why I didn't play 13...♘fd7 in the first place; but I ultimately rejected it because of 15.♘a5 ♕c7 16.♗xb6 ♕xb6 (16...♖xb6 17.♘d5 ♗xd5 18.exd5 ♘f4 19.♗d3, followed by ♗e4 and ♘c6, would give White an annoying bind on the queenside) 17.♕xb6 ♖xb6 18.♘d5 ♗xd5 19.exd5, but apparently Black is completely fine after 19...f6 20.♘c6 ♖b7, as he gets his counterplay.
15.♘c5 is another option, but it didn't bother me as much. As so often in these situations, I was wrong on both fronts: 15...b4 16.♘xe6 fxe6 17.♘e2 ♘c4 18.♗h3 ♕c8 19.♖d3, followed by ♗g4, looks better for White.
15.f4 exf4 Here 15...b4 16.♘e2! would help White massively.
16.♗xf4 ♖c8



17.♘d5 The best way to proceed was 17.♕g3! ♘a4 (17...♗xb3 18.axb3 b4 19.♘d5 ♘xd5 20.exd5; 17...♘c4 18.♘d4 b4 19.♘d5) 18.♘d5 ♗xd5 19.exd5 ♘db6 20.♗h3 ♖c4 21.♖he1

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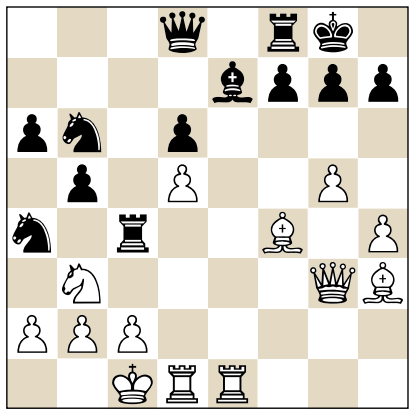
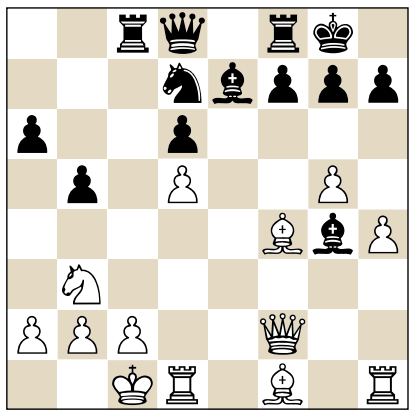


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

and all this would give White a very strong position in the centre, if not an extra pawn.

Instead, 17.♗xd6 ♗xd6 18.♖xd6 ♕c7 19.♖d2 ♘e5 would have been too hasty, since Black has very decent compensation after 20.♘d5 ♗xd5 21.exd5 ♘bc4 22.♖d4 a5 23.♗h3 a4! 24.♗xc8 axb3 25.axb3 ♕a5! 26.♔b1 ♖xc8 27.bxc4 ♖a8.

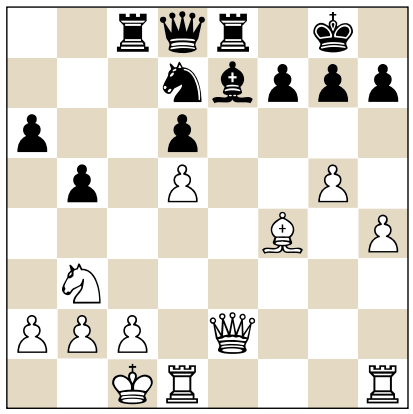
17...♘xd5 18.exd5 ♗g4



19.♗e2

19.♖e1 f6! would suddenly be good for Black: 20.g6 (20.♕d2 fxg5 21.♗xg5 ♘e5) 20...hxg6 21.♘d4 ♘e5, with unclear play.

19...♗xe2 20.♕xe2 ♖e8



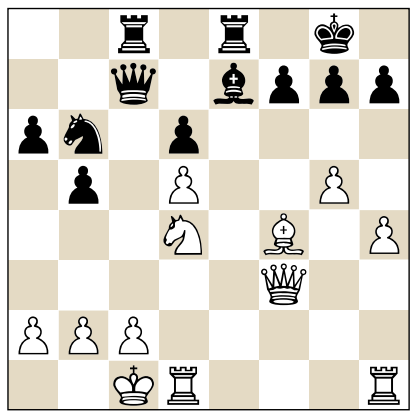
21.♕f3?!

Here 21.♕f2! ♕b6 22.♕g2! (or ♕d2/h2; 22.♗e3? ♗xg5) was my main concern. It's the best and subtlest way to proceed, since Black's queen is misplaced and White is ready to launch his pawns at Black's king: 22...♗f8 23.h5 ♖c4 24.♖hf1.

On the other hand, 21.♕g2 ♗f8 22.h5 ♕e7, followed by ...♕e4 or ...♕e2, looks OK for Black.

21...♕c7 22.♘d4 ♘b6!

Now preventing 23.♘c6 and creating counterplay against d5 at the right time.



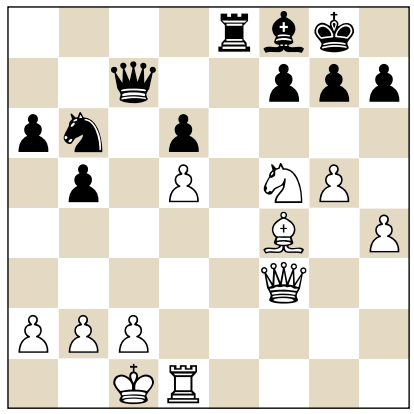
23.♖he1

23.♔b1 ♕c4 24.♗c1 (24.♘c6 ♘xd5) 24...♕xd5 25.♕xd5 ♘xd5 26.♘xb5 axb5 27.♖xd5 ♖c5 28.♖hd1 f6 would be close to a draw.

23...♗f8

23...g6!?, to prevent ♘f5, was also a decent option, since 24.♘c6 will still run into 24...♘xd5! 25.♕xd5 ♕xc6 26.♕xc6 ♖xc6 27.♗xd6? ♗xg5+ 28.hxg5 ♖xe1.

24.♖xe8 ♖xe8 25.♘f5!



25...♕c4

25...g6 26.♘h6+ ♗xh6 27.gxh6 would be awkward to meet, since White still has a lot of play on the dark squares,

so it is practically impossible to push the knight back.

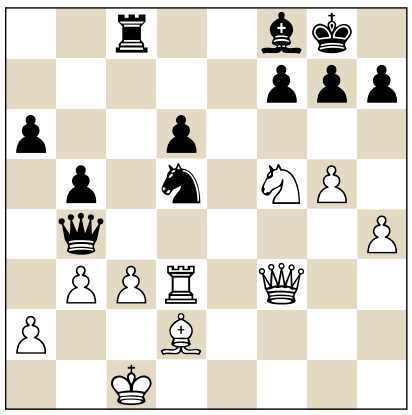
26.b3 ♕b4

26...♕e4 27.♕xe4 ♖xe4 28.♗xd6 g6 is met by 29.♘h6+.

27.c3!

27.h5 ♖e1 would be alright for Black.

27...♖c8 28.♖d3 ♘xd5 29.♗d2!



We had both seen this position in advance, but when I played 25...♕c4, I didn't realize how dangerous my position would still be, since I had assumed wrongly that I would get counterplay against White's king.

29...♘b6

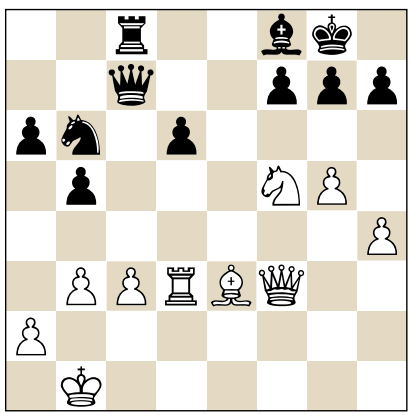
Forced, but now I had to take into account the possibility of ♘h6 sacs at every move.

30.♔b1

30.♘h6+ at once doesn't work yet: 30...gxh6 31.gxh6 ♕xh4 32.♕g2+ ♔h8 33.♖g3 (33.♖xd6 b4!) 33...♗xh6.

30...♕c5 31.♗e3 ♕c7

I would not have relieved my position with 31...♕c6 32.♕xc6 ♖xc6 33.♘d4 ♖c5 (33...♖c8 34.♘xb5) 34.♘c2 ♖d5 35.♗d4 ♘d7 36.♘e3.



32.♕f4

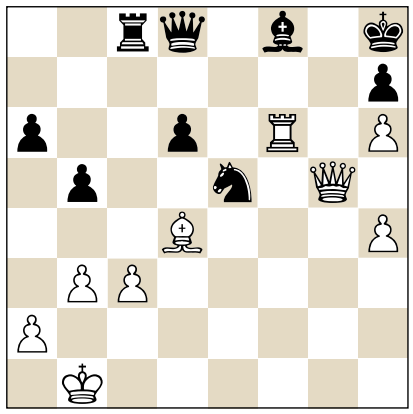
But here 32.♘h6+! was very dangerous from a practical point of view.

DAGOBERT KOHLMEYER

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave got out-prepared by Fabiano Caruana and 'messed it up a bit', but in the end his Najdorf experience helped him to turn the tables and score an important point.

But it is still possible to defend: 32...gxh6 33.gxh6 ♘d7, and now:

A) 34.♕g4+!?. This is the best practical chance, keeping a strong attack after 34...♔h8 35.♕g5! ♕d8 36.♗d4+ f6 37.♖f3 (37.♖g3 ♗xh6 38.♕xh6 ♕e7 39.♕g5 ♘e5) 37...♘e5 38.♖xf6



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and now:

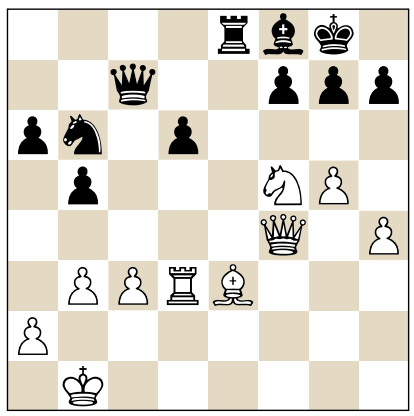
A1) 38...♕d7! 39.♖f1 (39.♗xe5 dxe5 40.♕xe5 ♕d1+) 39...♕e7 would be the only way to parry White's threats: 40.♖xf8+ (40.♕f5 ♖e8 41.♗e3 ♘g6) 40...♕xf8 41.♗xe5+ dxe5 42.♕xe5+ ♔g8 43.♕e6+, with a draw.

A2) But 38...♕e7? is bad in view of 39.♕f4 ♔g8 (39...♖e8 40.♖f7) 40.♕g3+ ♔h8 41.♖xd6.

B) 34.♕f5 ♘e5 35.♗d4 ♗xh6 36.♗xe5 dxe5 37.♖d7 ♕xd7 38.♕xd7 ♖xc3 39.♕e8+ (or 39.♕d6 ♗f8 40.♕xa6 b4) 39...♗f8 40.♕xe5 ♖c6, and in both cases Black establishes an efficient fortress.

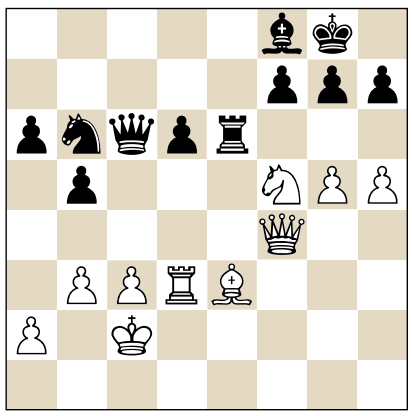
However, 32.♗f4! was objectively best and would have granted White an advantage after 32...♖e8 33.♗xd6 ♗xd6 34.♖xd6.

32...♖e8

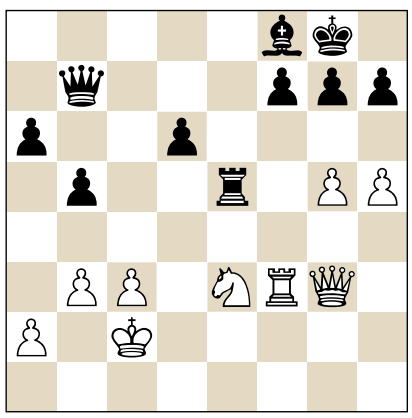


33.h5?! Here 33.♘xd6 ♖xe3 34.♕xe3 ♗xd6 35.♕e8+ ♗f8 36.♖d8 ♕c5 37.b4 ♕f5+! would have led to perpetual check: 38.♔c1 ♕f1+ 39.♔c2 ♕f5+ 40.♔b2 ♘c4+, but Fabiano wanted to take advantage of his initiative while we were both down on increments.

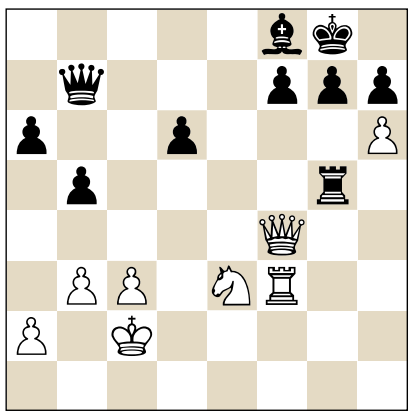
33...♖e6 Suddenly I managed to consolidate on the kingside and White's attack falters.
34.♔c2 ♕c6



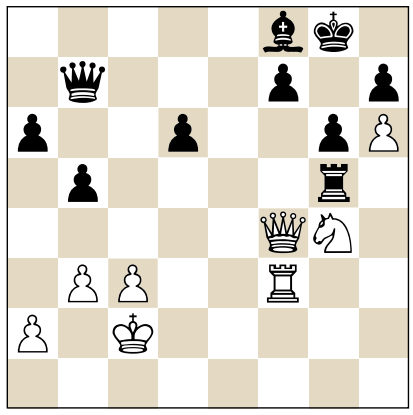
35.♗xb6?! Correct was 35.♘d4! ♕g2+ 36.♕f2 ♕xf2+ 37.♗xf2 ♖e5 38.♘c6 ♖e2+ 39.♖d2 ♖xd2+ 40.♔xd2, which would still have been enough to enter a drawish endgame, thanks to White's piece activity.
35...♕xb6 36.♖f3 ♕b7 37.♘e3 ♖e4! 38.♕g3 ♖e5



Fabiano failed to spot my threat, but anyway, a second pawn falls.
39.♕f4 Here 39.g6 hxg6 40.hxg6 ♕e4+ 41.♔b2 ♕xg6 would also have led to a technical win. **39...♖xg5 40.h6**



40...gxh6 I didn't see anything wrong with taking the pawn. The technical task might be slightly more complicated with a shattered pawn structure, but three pawns is still too much. 40...g6 41.♘g4 would have granted White one last sneaky trap:



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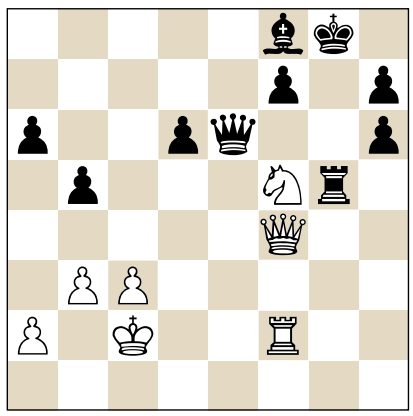
41...♖f5?? (41...f5! would still win easily) 42.♕xf5 gxf5 43.♘f6+ ♔h8 44.♖g3, and suddenly White is probably winning!

'Of course, winning such a crucial game in the first round helped me greatly throughout the event.'

41.♖f2 ♕d7 42.♘f5 ♕e6

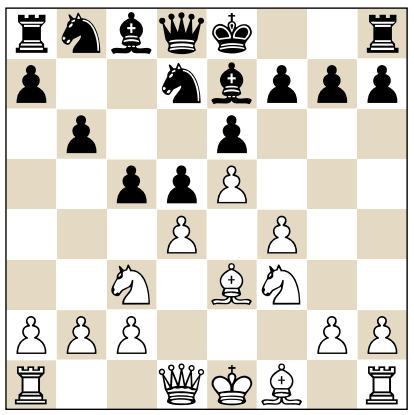


White resigned. Of course, winning such a crucial game in the first round helped me greatly throughout the event. And even though things went by no means smoothly from the start, it still was a very intense struggle.

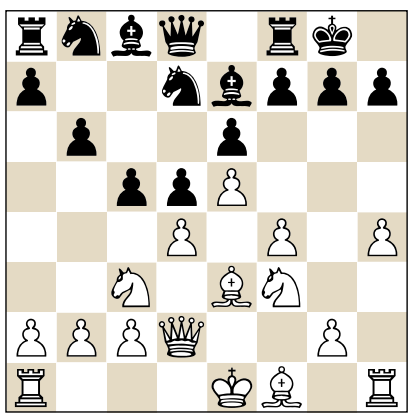
NOTES BY
Vladimir Kramnik

FR 4.4 – C11
Vladimir Kramnik
Rainer Buhmann
Dortmund 2016 (3)

Not much to be said before we start, except that, let's say, I was playing for a win.
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.f4 c5 6.♘f3 ♗e7 7.♗e3 b6



I noticed that this strange system has become very popular recently. New In Chess readers will remember the game Giri-Harikrishna from Norway Chess, which Harikrishna won in very convincing style, but still I cannot believe that with such a modest move, which doesn't even try to contest the centre, Black can be doing well. As I had seen that my opponent had also played it quite frequently, I had decided to investigate it before the tournament.
8.♕d2 0-0 9.h4!



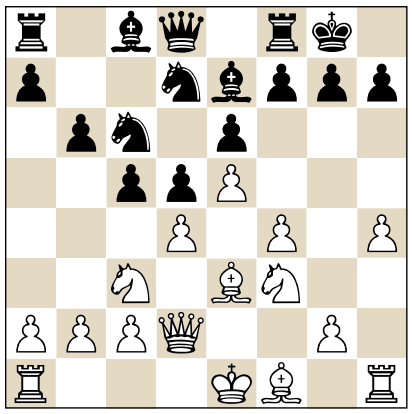
This is what I came up with. A strong

move that I think comes close to refuting the line. The point is that White should not hurry to castle queenside, because then Black will get ...c4 and a quick ...b5, with a strong attack. Before I castle I want to push my pawns. h4 is incredibly useful and creates lots of threats for Black in many lines.

9...♘c6

The only reasonable move.

One point of 9.h4 is that 9...cxd4 10.♘xd4 ♗xh4+ simply loses to 11.g3 ♗xg3+ 12.♔d1, and Black will be mated (apart from the fact that the black bishop is trapped).



LENNART OOTES

Vladimir Kramnik, aka Mr. Dortmund, has what amounts to a standing invitation to the tournament. Next year, celebrating his 25th participation, the event will even be named in his honour.

10.♗b5

This was my idea, but I also had a look at 10.♗d3, as with the pawn on h4 Black can never play 10...c4 11.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 12.♘g5+ ♔g8 13.♕e2, and White has a terrible attack. But after my analysis I had found that 10.♗b5 was more precise.

10...♕c7

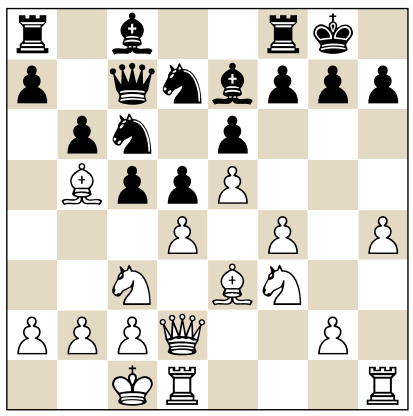
Played quickly, and after the game Rainer told me he had still been in his analysis. I hadn't actually even looked at this move, so now I was on my own. But I was not scared, since I don't have much trust in Black's position and was still happy that it had come on the board.

I looked at the natural 10...♗b7, after which I felt I would be seriously better.

And I looked at 10...♘xd4 11.♘xd4 cxd4 12.♗xd4, which after 12...♗xh4+ 13.g3 ♗xg3+ 14.♔e2 would be the same story as we saw before.

11.0-0-0

Also interesting was the immediate 11.h5, just to find out what Black would reply. But I wanted to keep my pawn on h4 for the moment, for reasons that will become clear later.

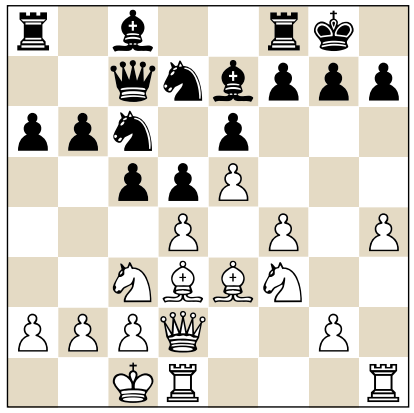


11...a6

Here 11...c4 doesn't work so well, as White has 12.f5, followed by f6, and I am much quicker.

12.♗d3

This gives me a better version than if I had played ♗d3 on move 10, although I also liked 12.♗xc6 ♕xc6, followed by 13.f5 (or perhaps 13.g4 b5 14.f5 b4 15.♘e2 c4) 13...exf5 14.dxc5. The text-move may be objectively best, but it also took my opponent out of book, and he thought for about 40 minutes about his response.



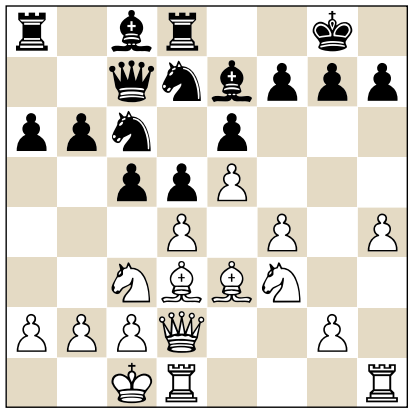
12...f5

Black's problem is that he always has to reckon with ♗xh7+ and a dangerous attack.

For example, 12...c4 is bad because of 13.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 14.♘g5+ ♔g8 15.♕e2, when 15...g6 is the only move; but after the most powerful move, 16.♕g4, followed by h5, it is going to be mate pretty soon.

After the prophylactic 12...h6 there is 13.g4 c4 14.g5, and the piece is not so relevant, since White simply has a mating attack.

While he was thinking, I was spending most of my time on 12...♖d8,



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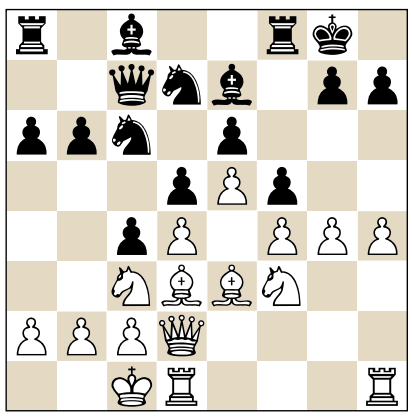
which may look like a strange move, but in many lines Black has ...♘f8, protecting the flank. White has many interesting options here. So in the end I settled on 13.♕f2, which stops ...♘f8 for the moment, since the c5-pawn is hanging, and 13...cxd4 14.♘xd4 gives me a much better version of standard positions in this line. And after 13...c4 14.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 15.f5 ♔g8 16.h5 seems to be crushing.

The most direct approach, 13.♕e2, is not so clear: 13...♘f8 14.♘g5 h6 (14...cxd4 runs into 15.♗xh7+ ♘xh7 16.♕h5 ♗xg5 17.hxg5 dxc3 18.♕xh7+ ♔f8 19.bxc3, with a very strong attack; on 14...g6, 15.♘xh7 followed by h5 is very strong) 15.♕h5 cxd4 16.♘xf7 ♗c5, and I was not so sure about this position. And indeed the computer says that Black is doing well.

13.g4 This was my idea, and I felt this was very strong, but things are not that simple.

13...c4

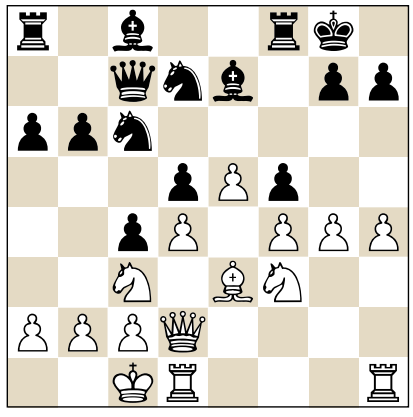


14.gxf5

This is good enough, but I had to choose from many options.

Tempting was 14.♘g5, with huge complications that I was not so sure about.

Actually, the best move and the cleanest way to a serious advantage was 14.♗xf5! exf5



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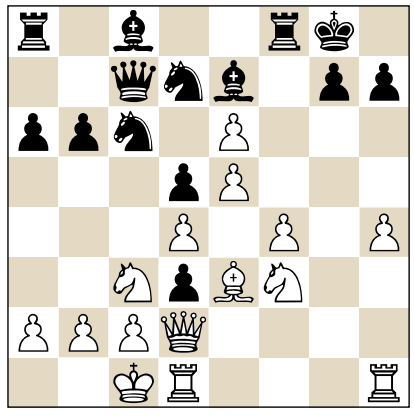
15.♕g2 (the computer's move and a difficult one to spot. I had automatically calculated 15.♘xd5 ♕b7 16.gxf5 ♖xf5, which is not so clear) 15...♘db8 16.♘xd5 ♕b7 17.gxf5 ♗xf5 18.♖hg1 ♗d8 19.♘d2, and White is seriously better.

'At first the computer says that 16...♕b7 is interesting, but after I put in some obvious moves, it got depressed and started to understand life.'

After the game many commentators suggested 14.♗f1, because this is the move the computer suggests, but I think this is absolutely unclear after 14...b5 15.gxf5 ♖xf5 16.♗h3 ♘b6 17.♗xf5 exf5. I understand that White may be objectively better, but Black has serious counterplay starting with ...b4, and at least in a practical game it didn't seem so clear to me.

14...cxd3 15.fxe6

To me this looked really bad for Black. I have many pawns for the piece, d5 will probably fall, so I should be doing fine.

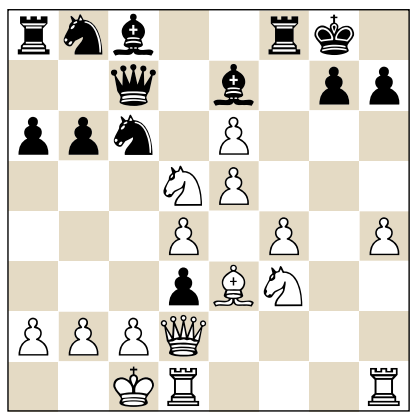


15...♘db8

I simply could not believe that this would work.

I was expecting 15...♘b4, to get some counterattack. My plan was to go 16.a3, when his only reasonable move is 16...a5 17.♖dg1, and the computer assesses this as slightly better for White. But Black may have some tactical tricks.

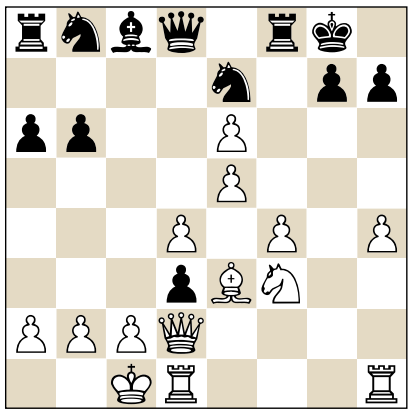
16.♘xd5



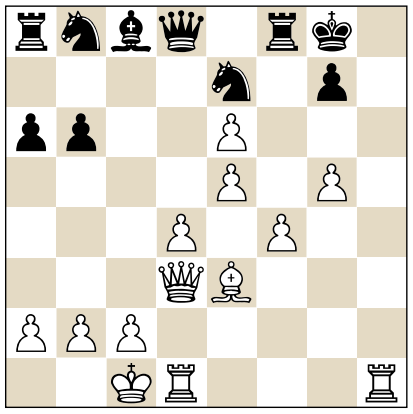
16...♕d8 The best move.

At first the computer says that 16...♕b7 is interesting, but after I put in some obvious moves, it got depressed and started to understand life: 17.f5 ♖xf5 18.♘g5 ♗xg5 19.hxg5 ♗xe6 20.♘f6+ gxf6 21.gxf6 ♔h8 22.♖dg1 ♖a7 23.♗h6, and White is winning.

17.♘xe7+ ♘xe7



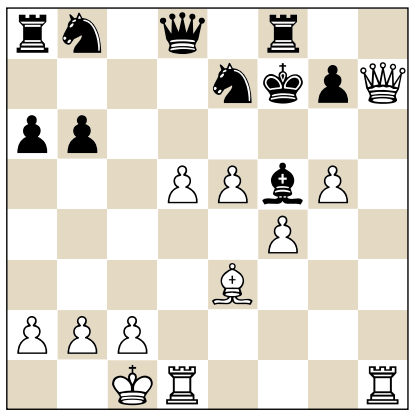
18.♘g5!
I have to sacrifice a piece, but it is almost crushing.
My original plan was 18.♕xd3, but after 18...♗xe6 19.c4 Black has the important resource 19...♕c8, when he is not worse.
18...h6 The only move.
Black has no time to pick up pawns. After 18...dxc2 19.♕xc2 ♘f5 20.d5 ♗b7 21.♕b3 White has an overwhelming advantage.
19.♕xd3 hxg5 20.hxg5



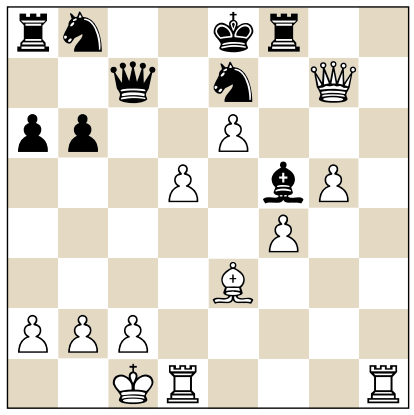
20...♗xe6
Again the only move. During the game I thought it would lose by force, so I tried to look for other moves.
I thought 20...♘f5 might give better chances, but after 21.♕b3 ♕e7 22.d5 Black's position collapses.
21.♕h7+
My position looked so good and Rainer was down to five minutes (although he still had the 30-second increments), but now I did what I do so often: relaxing too early. I thought I was winning by force and didn't bother to recheck the lines, although I still had close to an hour on the clock.

'Frankly, I thought we were already close to signing our score-sheets and my opponent congratulating me with a deserved victory.'

21...♔f7 22.d5
What strengthened my idea was that it looked as if Rainer had missed this move, as he spent almost all his remaining time on his next move. Frankly, I thought we were already close to signing our score-sheets and my opponent congratulating me with a deserved victory. I even started thinking about my next game...
22...♗f5
I thought he just wanted to play two more moves and then resign...



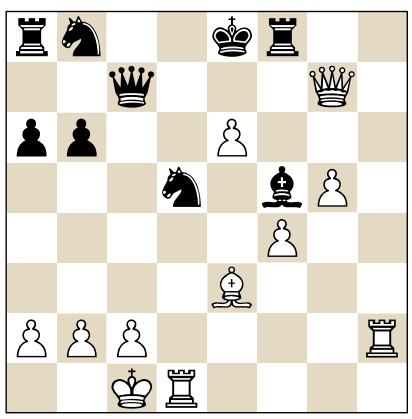
23.e6+?
Played without thinking and a terrible mistake.
Simplest was 23.♕h5+ ♗g6, and now the computer gives the sophisticated 24.♕e2, protecting the c2-square (but even the simple human 24.♕f3 leads to a position after 24...♔e8 25.♖h2 ♕c7 26.♗d4 in which he is not only objectively better, but in which Black's position is simply impossible to defend over the board, especially with so little time), when after 24...♘xd5 25.♕f3 ♔e6 26.c4 it's simply over.
Also strong was 23.g6+ ♔e8 (or 23...♗xg6 24.e6+ ♔e8 25.♕xg7 ♕c7 26.c3 ♖g8 27.♖h8) 24.♕xg7 ♕c7 25.♖d2 ♘xd5 26.♕h6! ♕c6 27.g7 ♖g8 28.e6 ♕xe6 29.♕h5+ ♔e7 30.♗xb6!, and White is winning.
23...♔e8 24.♕xg7
And I thought he was going to resign. But with, like, two minutes on his clock he played:
24...♕c7
And to my horror I spotted the ...♘xd5 trick. At first I still thought that my position remained strong enough to win (I am two pieces down, but I have five pawns, the a8-rook and the b8-knight are totally out of play and there are lots of mating threats, the main one being ♖h8), but then it began to dawn on me that the position had become completely unclear. I still wanted to win the game, but in actual fact White will have to settle for a draw.



25.♖h2
I also calculated 25.♖d2 ♘xd5 26.♕d4, when it is clear that my position is no longer as proud as it was. The computer still indicates that it's equal after 26...♗xe6 27.♖e1, but if anyone can play for a win, it is Black.
And then I got the idea to give up my queen. I understood that it might be losing objectively, but the ensuing position is so strange and unbalanced that I believed I would be able to rely on my opponent's time-trouble. At the same time, it looked so beautiful

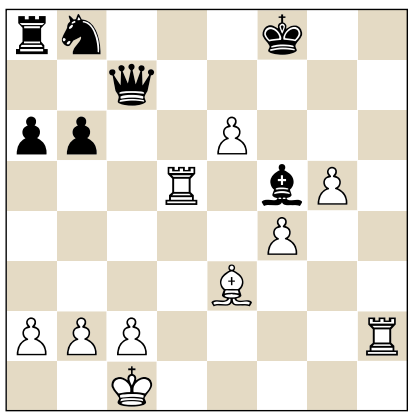
that I could not resist. It was aesthetically appealing that with only one piece for the queen I would not only be able to play for a win, but even do so slowly.
Actually, I first considered the idea of the queen sacrifice while thinking about my 25th move. There I looked at 25.c3 ♘xd5 26.♕xf8+ ♔xf8 27.♖xd5, but now Black has 27...♗e4, and I only have a draw after 28.♖h8+ ♔e7 29.f5 ♗xd5 30.♖h7+ ♔d8 31.♖h8+, with a perpetual.

25...♘xd5

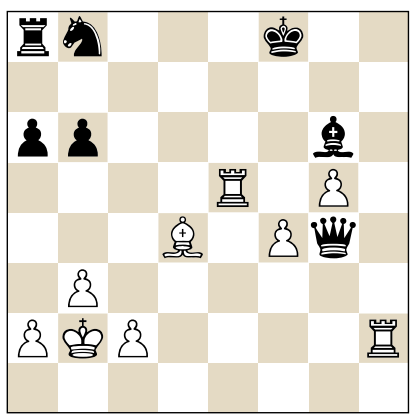


And so I closed my eyes, prayed for a minute and went for the sacrifice:

26.♕xf8+ ♔xf8 27.♖xd5



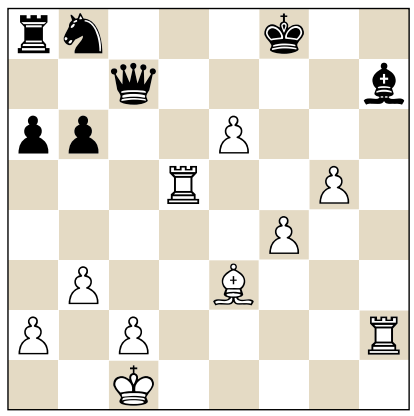
27...♗h7
This was the move I had mainly considered. It's human to block the rook on the h-file.
Here 27...♗e4 does not work in view of 28.♖e5, when Black has to give his queen, and after 28...♕xe5 29.fxe5 ♔g7 30.♗xb6 White is close to winning.
But the almighty computer points out 27...♗g6!, and in fact it's probably winning: 28.b3 ♕c3 29.♗d4. This looks terribly scary for Black, but he can simply play 29...♕e1+ (29...♕g3) 30.♔b2 ♕xe6 31.♖e5 ♕g4.



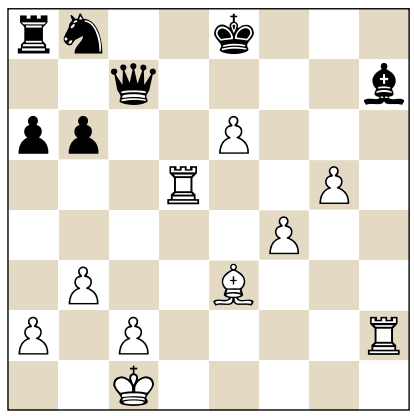
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A very difficult move to find, stopping f5 because of ...♕xd4+. But after this move probably even Mikhail Tal would run out of ideas, and the computer indicates that it's all over for White.
Actually I thought that 27...♗xe6 would also be losing, but it is only a draw: 28.♖h8+ ♗g8 29.♖f5+ ♔e7 30.♖xg8, and here any human would stop calculating in the belief that White would win. But the computer points out 30...♕c6, and White has no more than a draw, for instance 31.b3 ♘d7 32.♖g7+ ♔e8, with perpetual check.

28.b3!
A beautiful move that I enjoyed playing. It's a prophylactic move, preparing ♔b2, and although Black has a queen against a piece, he is totally stuck. White has no concrete threats, but it is very difficult for Black to make a move, and I became optimistic again.



28...♔e8 This confused me. He was playing on increments, and this seemed to waste a tempo.
I had expected 28...♖a7, trying to deploy the rook and protect the bishop on h7. Now there's the funny line 29.g6!? ♗xg6 30.♖h8+ ♔e7 31.c4 ♔xe6 32.f5+ ♗xf5 33.♖h6+ ♔e7 34.♗g5+ ♔f7 35.♖xf5+ ♔g7 36.♗d2, and the computer says this is equal, whatever that means – in a game I think any human would take White. But I intended 29.♔b2, after which the computer thinks the chances are equal.



29.g6
I thought I'd be better after this move, but it only leads to a draw.
My first intention was 29.♔b2, and this is actually also the choice of the computer. It also leads to a draw, but

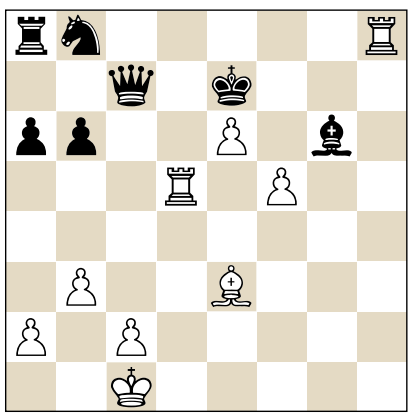
Dortmund 2016 — **cat. XX**

					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		TPR
1	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	IGM	FRA	2798	*	½	½	1	½	1	1	1	5½	2952
2	Leinier Dominguez	IGM	CUB	2713	½	*	½	½	½	1	½	½	4	2784
3	Vladimir Kramnik	IGM	RUS	2812	½	½	*	½	½	½	1	½	4	2770
4	Fabiano Caruana	IGM	USA	2810	0	½	½	*	½	½	1	1	4	2770
5	Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu	IGM	GER	2674	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	3½	2739
6	Ruslan Ponomariov	IGM	RUS	2706	0	0	½	½	½	*	1	1	3½	2735
7	Evgeniy Najer	IGM	RUS	2687	0	½	0	0	½	0	*	1	2	2580
8	Rainer Buhmann	IGM	GER	2653	0	½	½	0	½	0	0	*	1½	2512

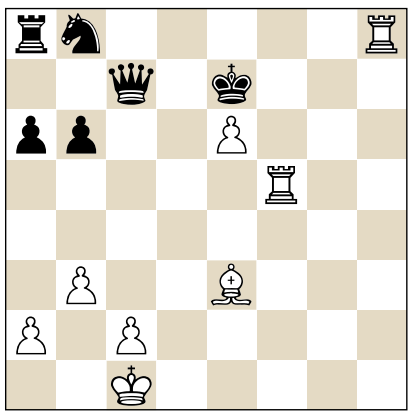
it's White who has practical chances. There are a few absolutely fascinating lines: I was expecting 29...♖a7, when 30.c4 is the most interesting move: 30...♕e7 31.♗xb6 ♘c6 32.♗xa7 ♕xa7 33.♖d7 ♕e3, and apparently Black is always in time for perpetual check.
On 29...♗e4 there is 30.c4! ♗xd5 31.♖h8+ ♔e7 32.♖h7+ ♔d6 33.♖xc7 ♔xc7 34.cxd5 (quite a serious pawn avalanche!) 34...♔d6 35.♗xb6 ♔xd5 36.e7 ♘c6 37.♗d8 ♖xd8 38.exd8♕+ ♘xd8 39.♔c3 ♘c6! (cutting off the king – 39...♘e6 40.g6). 40.g6 ♔e6 41.♔c4 ♘e7 42.g7 ♔f7, and Black is just in time to secure the draw.

29...♗xg6 30.♖h8+ ♔e7 31.f5

This is possible because I have played b3. Without that move Black would now have the killing ...♕g3.



31...♗xf5 After 31...♕g3 I have 32.♖d3 ♕e1+ 33.♔b2. **32.♖xf5**



32...♕c3

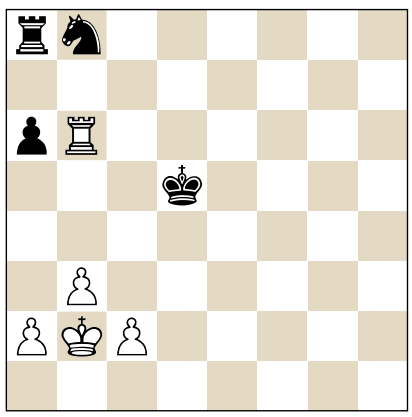
And to my horror I discovered that b3 had also created a square for the black queen on c3. And that I had no choice but to force a draw.
In my calculations I had automatically played 32...♔xe6 here, thinking there was nothing else in view of ♖f7+, when White runs no risks after 33.♖ff8, and drawing this in practice will not be so easy for Black.

33.♗g5+ Played with a heavy heart. I spent some time considering whether I could bluff with 33.♖h3, but I saw that it would simply lose after 33...♔xe6 34.♖f8 ♖a7. If I now take on b8, he will counterattack with ...♕a1+ and ...♖d7+, and I will simply lose. But I still wanted to win so badly that I thought for about 10 minutes.

33...♔xe6 34.♖f6+

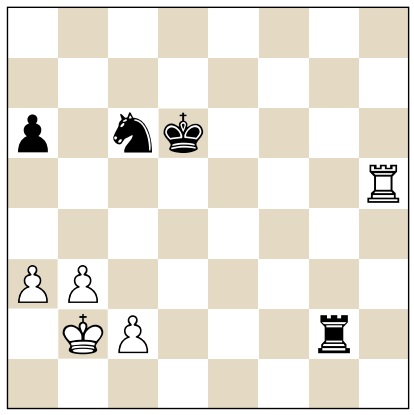
The following sequence is forced.

34...♕xf6 35.♗xf6 ♔xf6 36.♖h6+ ♔e5 37.♖xb6 ♔d5 38.♔b2



In fact, I still had hopes of winning here, although White is no longer even better!

38...♘c6 39.a3 ♔c5 40.♖b7 ♖g8 41.♖h7 ♖g2 42.♖h5+ ♔d6 43.♔c3 ♖g3+ 44.♔b2 ♖g2 45.♔c3 ♖g3+ 46.♔b2 ♖g2



And draw agreed.
A fascinating game that I quite enjoyed. I had wanted to win, of course, but I was not all that disappointed that it ended in a draw, because to play such an incredibly sharp and crazy game is always a joy. There were a lot of spectators, and they rose for an ovation at the end. I only regretted playing 29.g6, because if I had played 29.♔b2 and won, sacrificing a queen for a piece and a slow attack, it would have been like a Tal game played at his peak. ■

LENNART OOTES

The fascinating fight between Rainer Buhmann and Vladimir Kramnik has come to an end. As they agreed on a draw, the spectators in the hall rose for an ovation.

Chess Pattern Recognition

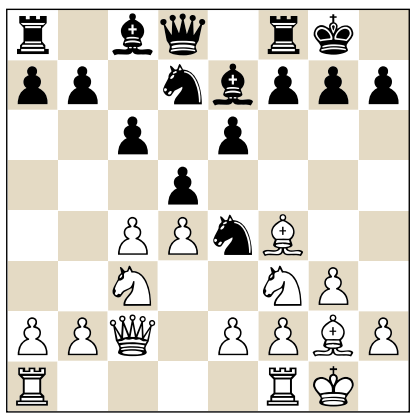
ARTHUR VAN DE OUDEWEETERING

The Ace of Space: g4!

Play your cards on the kingside. When a brutal weakening of your own king's position is allowed.

Eljanov-Carlsen
Wijk aan Zee 2016

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.g3 ♗b4+ 5.♗d2 ♗e7 6.♗g2 0-0 7.0-0 ♘bd7 8.♕c2 ♘e4 The solid 8...c6 is more common. **9.♗f4 c6 10.♘c3**

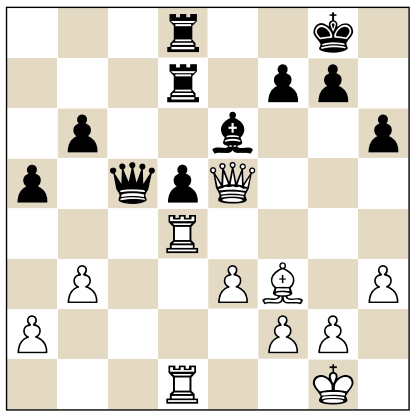


10...g5!? Like a jack-in-the-box, the g-pawn leaves its own king! Shouldn't that be a terrible weakness while there seems to be no dangerous attack against the white king in the making? **11.♗e3** Not unusually with a World Champion's idea, it quickly found followers. Several of the opponents opted for 11.♗c1, when Carlsen's surprising reply, 11...♘d6, would be less effective after 12.cxd5 exd5 13.e4. **11...♘d6!?** Remarkably enough, the aggressive advance to gain space is immediately followed by a retreat. Obviously the knight has two concrete goals: the pawn on c4 and a jump to f5. And unlike after 11.♗c1, the immediate reply e2-e4 is now made impossible by the e3-bishop. Eljanov's reply was no less original: **12.b3** 12.cxd5 cxd5 13.♕c1 h6 14.h4 is the more standard way to try and exploit Black's weakened kingside, as seen in the rapid game Li Chao-Fressinet (wasn't he in Carlsen's team?), Huai'an 2016. **12...♘f5 13.g4!? ♘xe3 14.fxe3** But Carlsen was quick to meet White's intended e3-e4: **14...b5 15.e4 b4** Now Eljanov was tempted by the attractive piece sac **16.exd5** 16.♘a4 would be the normal reply **16...bxc3 17.dxc6,** but could not prove his point afterwards: **17...♘b8 18.♕e4 f5 19.gxf5 exf5 20.♕d5+ ♕xd5 21.cxd5 ♘a6 22.♖ac1 ♘c7 23.♘e5 f4 24.♘c4 ♖d8 25.♖xc3 ♘xd5 26.c7 ♘xc7 27.♗xa8 ♘xa8 28.e3 ♗b4 29.♖c2 ♗b7 30.h4 ♗e4 31.♖h2 ♘b6 32.♘e5 fxe3 33.hxg5 ♖xd4 34.♘g4 ♘d5** 0-1.
Chess Informant decided to choose this game as their Best Game of Issue 127.

The seemingly risky space-gaining move was soon adopted by strong players like Duda and Vallejo. A fresh discovery? Let's go back to the 13th of April 1963, when, coincidentally, one Garry Kimovich was born:

Petrosian-Botvinnik
Moscow WC 1963 (match-9)

1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.♗g2 ♘f6 4.♘f3 ♗e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.d4 ♘bd7 7.♕c2 c6 8.♗f4 ♘e4 9.♘c3 g5 A different move order, but the same position. In the book on the match Akopian does not devote a single word to this move. Is it that obvious? **10.♗c1 f5** Well, in Stonewall positions, the space-gaining advance is certainly not uncommon. For Botvinnik, a Stonewall adept from an early age, the advance ...g7-g5 would come naturally. With his firm control of the centre, Black will not easily be bothered by the self-inflicted weaknesses. **11.b3 ♗f6 12.♗b2 ♗g7** In the Bangkok Open this year, Vallejo opted for the manoeuvre 12...♕e7 13.e3 ♕g7, although 12...b6, the so-called modern way to develop Black's Stonewall bishop, could be a sound alternative. **13.♖ad1 ♖f7?!** This plan allowed Petrosian to open up the centre after **14.♘xe4 fxe4 15.♘e1 ♘f8 16.f3 exf3 17.♗xf3** ½-½ (55). And although the game ended in a draw, the pawn on g5 does seem a bit odd by now.
Admittedly not a very spectacular follow-up, but you can easily search the database for quite successful outings in Stonewall-like positions, e.g. Hjartarson-Spassky, Reykjavik 1985 (from the same opening).

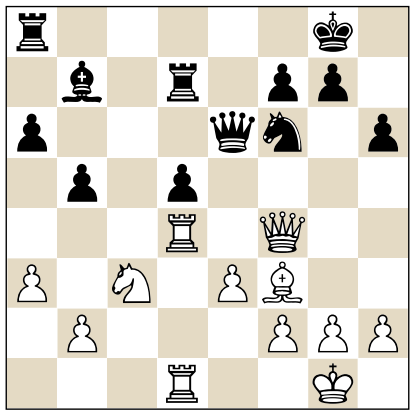


Botvinnik-Zagoriansky
Sverdlovsk 1943
position after 24...a5

This is a completely different kind of position, but again the g-pawn

advances before its own king, something you would not quickly associate with an IQP position. **25.g4!** Botvinnik explains: 'At the cost of weakening his own king's position (which is only possible thanks to the restricted enemy pieces) White opens the position on the kingside. Soon it becomes clear that Black cannot defend his king's fortress and his ill-fated pawn on d5.' Indeed, a fine example of creating a second front. **25...♕c6 26.g5 hxg5 27.♕xg5** Now White is ready to enter along the h-file with ♖h4 and ♕h5. **27...f6 28.♕g6 ♗f7 29.♕g3 f5** A pretty ugly move, granting White more squares and targets, although Botvinnik argued that Black was facing insurmountable problems due to the inevitable transfer of the d1-rook to g1. A more patient defence would have been appropriate. **30.♕g5 ♕e6 31.♔h1 ♕e5 32.♖g1 ♖f8?! 33.♕h6** Now Black's position just contains too many weaknesses. **33...♖b8 34.♖h4 ♔f8 35.♕h8+ ♗g8 36.♖f4 ♖bb7 37.♖g5 ♖f7 38.♕h5 ♕a1+ 39.♔g2 g6 40.♕xg6 ♗h7 41.♕d6+ ♖fe7 42.♕d8+ ♖e8 1-0.**

Here is a similar strategy in a recent game:



Gupta-Rozentalis
Warsaw 2016
position after 22...♖d7

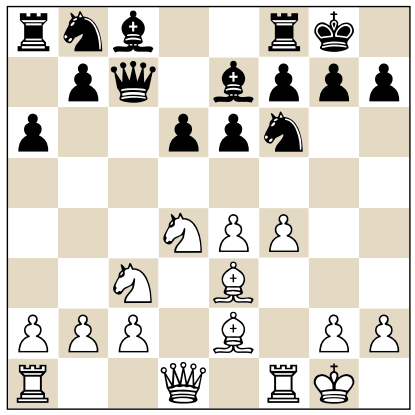
23.h4 ♖ad8 24.g4 Of course, the hook on h6 makes this advance more attractive: the opening of the h-file would greatly strengthen White's attack. Evidently, with a white rook still on h1 (and the king on, say, e1) this plan would be much more obvious. **24...♘h7 25.♕g3 ♘f6 26.♕f4 ♘h7 27.♔g2 ♗c6 28.♕g3** White shows no hurry and carefully prepares g4-g5. **28...f6 29.♕f4!** White immediately changes tack, now that the black knight can no longer defend the d5-pawn from f6. **29...♘f8 30.♕f5! g6 31.♕c2 ♔g7 32.♘e2 ♗b7 33.h5** Black cannot avoid another weakness, so his passive position soon becomes indefensible. **33...♖c8 34.♕d3 ♖c4 35.b3 ♖xd4 36.♘xd4 ♕e5 37.hxg6 ♘xg6 38.♖h1** 1-0.

'Like a jack-in-the-box, the g-pawn leaves its own king!'

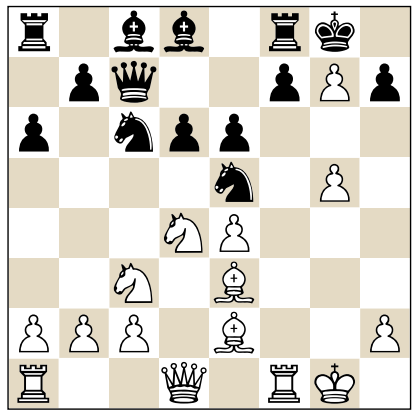
We finish with a probably better known, theoretical advance in front of the king. However, here the situation in the centre has not yet been stabilized.

Kholmov-Spassky
Moscow 1964

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 d6 6.♗e2 a6 7.0-0 ♗e7 8.♗e3 ♕c7 9.f4 0-0



10.g4!? Great attacking players like Shirov and Polgar had successes on the White side, but here we have a White player who was known to be a great defender. Kholmov himself: 'In general I do not rush into such sharp pawn advances, when I have not completed my development. However, even players with a quiet positional style sometimes have the urge to go for complications.' **10...♘c6** 10...d5 is the most dogmatic try: 'always meet a wing attack by acting in the centre.' Not a bad try either; see for instance Fedorchuk-Navara, Croatia 2014, which continued 11.exd5 (11.e5 ♘e4 12.♘xe4 dxe4 13.♕e1 is a not illogical reply to keep the centre closed. One early example is Olafsson-Stein, Stockholm 1962, a final-round interzonal game which cost Stein his chance of qualifying for the legendary Curaçao Candidates tournament) 11...♘xd5 12.♘xd5 exd5 13.♗f3 ♘c6 when 14.♗xd5 seems a bit shaky after 14...♖d8. **11.g5 ♘d7 12.f5 ♘de5 13.f6 ♗d8 14.fxg7**



14...♖e8? Kholmov indicated 14...♔xg7 as a better move, as we will see that White's pawn on g7 will not serve as a shield against White's attack. **15.♕d2 b5 16.♗h5 ♘e7 17.b3** 17.♘cxb5 axb5 18.♘xb5 ♕c6 19.♘xd6 ♗b7 was assessed as 'very, very unclear' by Kholmov during the game. Nowadays the engine leaves no doubt: 20.♗xf7+ ♘xf7 21.♖xf7, and Black is tied up. The text-move was probably more to Kholmov's liking and eventually also yielded him a win. **17...♘7g6 18.a4 bxa4 19.♖xa4 ♗b7 20.♘f3 ♕e7 21.♘xe5 dxe5 22.♖c4 ♔xg7 23.♘a4 ♔g8 24.♗xg6 hxg6 25.♕c3!** 1-0 (57).

Let Shirov's point of view about Black's set-up here (after move 9) inspire you: 'A provocative line'. Now, do you still harbour any doubts about moving your g-pawn in front of your king? ■

Is there method to his System?

A new edition of his classic works invited **MATTHEW SADLER** to return to the writings of Aron Nimzowitsch. Would his childhood hero still appeal to him?

When Natasha Regan and I interviewed Nigel Short and Yasser Seirawan last year for our book *Chess for Life*, one of the topics that came up was instructional books. Inevitably, the conversation turned to Nimzowitsch's *My System*. Yasser didn't like it very much, and as an illustration he mentioned that he found Nimzowitsch's concept of over-protection over the top. Nigel praised Nimzowitsch as an influence on his play but – in his inimitable manner – he showed us his copy of *My System* in Lithuanian and said that this was the only way to read it!

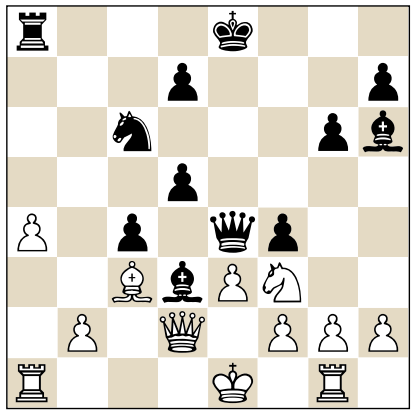
I felt a little sad, as *My System* was a book that meant a lot to me as a teenager. It certainly wasn't the best period of my career – after getting my IM title at the age of 14, I stagnated at 2450-2500 for a rather long time – but for me there's a big dollop of nostalgia for a youth long lost associated with that book. *My System* was also responsible for one of the nicest games I played in that period: a victory against GM Julian Hodgson. Until that game, Jules had generally done this sort of thing to me:

Matthew Sadler
Julian Hodgson
London 1988

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5 4.♘f3 g6 5.cxb5 a6 6.♘c3 axb5 7.d6 ♕a5 8.e3 exd6 9.♗xb5 ♘e4 10.♗d2 ♘xc3 11.♗xc3 ♕xb5 12.a4 ♕c4 13.♗xh8

Jules said to me after the game that with this move, I'd helped him to complete his kingside development!

13...♗a6 14.♖c1 ♕e4 15.♕b3 ♘c6 16.♗c3 ♗h6 17.♕c2 ♗d3 18.♕d2 d5 19.♖d1 c4 20.♖g1 f5 21.♖a1 f4

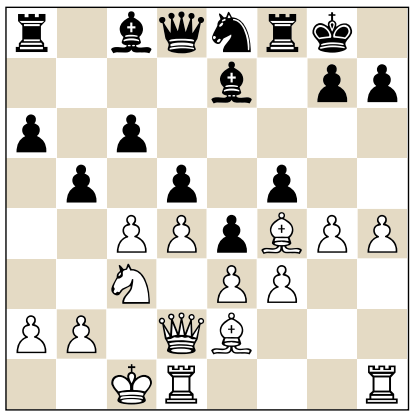


Amazing coordination of the pieces. I kept on struggling to make a fight of it, but the result was never in doubt.

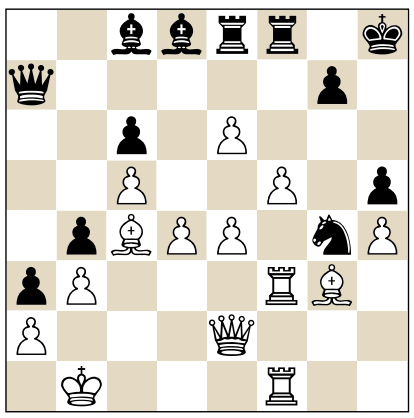
However, armed with Nimzowitsch's advice to undermine the centre at the base of the pawn chain, I managed to do this:

Matthew Sadler
Julian Hodgson
London 1989

1.d4 d6 2.c4 e5 3.♘f3 e4 4.♘g5 f5 5.♘c3 ♘f6 6.h4 c6 7.♘h3 ♘a6 8.♗g5 ♗e7 9.e3 ♘c7 10.♘f4 0-0 11.♗e2 ♘e6 12.♕d2 ♘xf4 13.♗xf4 ♘e8 14.0-0-0 a6 15.f3 b5 16.g4 d5



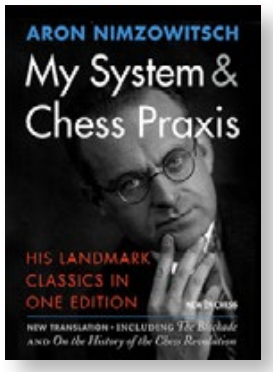
17.gxf5 b4 18.♘xe4 dxe4 19.fxe4 a5 20.♗d3 a4 21.♗g3 ♘f6 22.♕e2 h5 23.e5 ♘g4 24.♖df1 ♕a5 25.♔b1 ♖a7 26.♖f3 ♗d8 27.♖hf1 a3 28.b3 ♖e7 29.c5 ♔h8 30.♗c4 ♕a7 31.e6 ♖ee8 32.e4



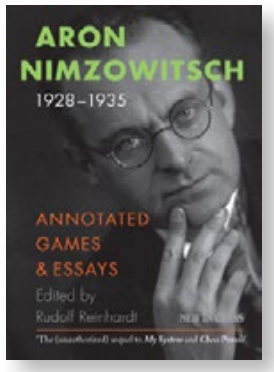
32...g6 33.fxg6 ♕g7 34.♖f7 ♖xf7 35.gxf7 ♖f8 36.♗d6 ♕xd4 37.♗xf8 ♗f6 38.♖xf6 ♘xf6 39.♗d6 1-0.

You can't help feeling fond of Nimzowitsch after a game like that! It was

My System & Chess Praxis by Aron Nimzowitsch New In Chess, 2016
★★★★★



Aron Nimzowitsch 1928-1935 edited by Rudolf Reinhardt New In Chess, 2013
★★★★★



interesting therefore to get a chance to re-evaluate my opinion of Nimzowitsch's work with New In Chess's re-release of *My System & Chess Praxis – His Landmark Classics in One Edition* as well as *Aron Nimzowitsch 1928-1935 – Annotated Games and Essays* by Rudolf Reinhardt. More than 1,000 pages of Nimzowitsch!

Before I started on *My System*, I read through *Aron Nimzowitsch 1928-1935*. This is a collection of Nimzowitsch's games and writings from 1928 until his early death in 1935. Nimzowitsch annotated a huge number of his games in various publications, and this wonderful book brings them all together in one place. One thing that struck me was Nimzowitsch's obvious delight (you might even say compulsion) in making a complete 'story' or narrative out of a game or a series of events. For example, Nimzowitsch's article 'Long Live Optimism... and Morning Gymnastics!' attributes his great success in the 1929 Carlsbad tournament (clear first with 15/21, ahead of Capablanca, Bogoljubow and other greats) to a regime of physical exercise that he started three months before the tournament. In every game Nimzowitsch's annotations relate the good decisions he made (both chess and psychological) to this activity.

Another example is the article 'Lack of Malleability in Playing Style Causes Loss of Game', in which Nimzowitsch takes a weakness of Spielmann's game (perceived or otherwise) and projects it onto all of the decisions Spielmann made during the game.

I'll come back to this characteristic of Nimzowitsch later: I think it permeates all his work and *My System* in particular.

So what is *My System*? That's a difficult question to answer. Previous commentators have pointed out already that *My System* isn't a system at all. You cannot read this book and hope to emerge with a framework you can use to evaluate a position and choose the correct move out of a choice of alternatives. I've tended to see *My System* as a collection of (usually) interesting independent positional ideas which might be of inspirational value in a practical game (as in my game against Julian Hodgson). In the Foreword, Nimzowitsch explains that he has defined eight elements of chess strategy:

1. The centre
2. Open files
3. Play on the 7th and 8th ranks
4. The passed pawn
5. The pin
6. The discovered check
7. Exchanging
8. The pawn chain

Nimzowitsch continues: 'I will give you a series of laws and rules for each of these elements that you will be able to apply, rules that I will go into in great detail and which will help clarify even the most seemingly arcane links between events that occur frequently on our beloved 64 squares.'

You can argue a little about that list. For example, I find it hard to understand why the discovered check should be an element of chess strategy rather than just a tactical motif.

The second half of the book, is – according to Nimzowitsch – an explanation of positional play based 'on the knowledge we have so laboriously wrung from our examination of the elements'. That sounds great, but to my mind, Nimzowitsch makes little effort to draw both parts of the book together by explaining how the understanding of specific elements lead to mastery of a specific positional concept.

'What struck me was Nimzowitsch's obvious delight (you might even say compulsion) in making a complete "story" out of a game or a series of events.'

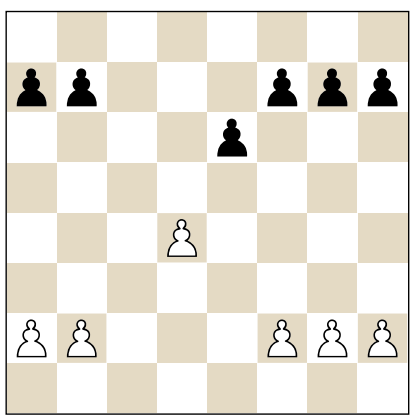
However, reading through *My System* again after all these years, a number of positive features struck me that had not occurred to me before. It starts with the elements 2 (Open files) and 3 (Play on the 7th and 8th ranks). Nimzowitsch explains: 'The ideal of every operation along a file lies in the ultimate penetration along the path of this line into the opponent's position, hence the 7th or 8th rank (from White's point of view).'

It's an obvious remark, but I feel it illustrates how Nimzowitsch viewed chess. It combines two of the elements Nimzowitsch has defined in order to create a story line within a game: in this case, the story line of a file that gets opened and then witnesses an invasion by one of the armies on the 7th or 8th ranks (and then the exploitation of these ranks according to Nimzowitsch's dictums). It's not a

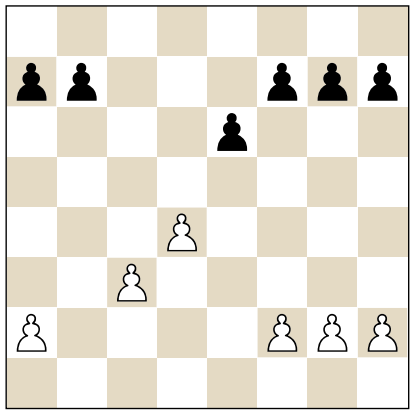
'system', but it is a common scenario that might help you choose a sensible course of action in a specific position.

The same comment applies to Nimzowitsch's very interesting examination of a possible lifecycle of an Isolated Queen's Pawn.

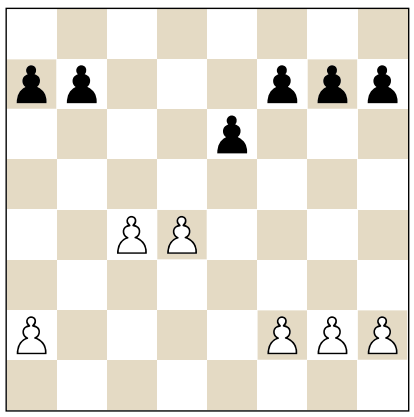
From 'Isolated Queen's Pawn':



To 'Isolated Pawn Couple' (after an exchange of knights on c3):



To 'Hanging Pawns' (after White achieves c3-c4):



I also got interested again in Nimzowitsch's idea of over-protection. This is what Nimzowitsch writes about it in the section about Prophylaxis. He calls over-protection 'prophylaxis to the inside':

'At his best though, I find Nimzowitsch's writing evocative and thought-provoking.'

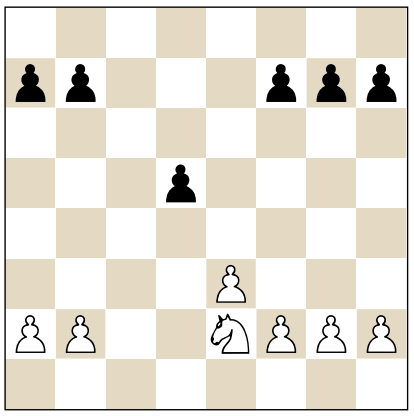
'The evil lies in the fact that our pieces are out of touch (or in insufficient contact) with the points that are of strategic importance to us. Because I understand this situation as an evil, I am compelled to postulate the strategic requirement that our own strategically important points must be over-protected – that is protecting these points more than they are attacked – and to do so ahead of time.

'Weak points – still more, however, strong points – in brief all the points that can be grouped together under the collective concept 'strategically important points' must be over-protected.'

Later Nimzowitsch contradicts himself a little (or clarifies his view of over-protection of weak points depending on your viewpoint):

Nimzowitsch's theory is that pieces are inherently well-placed if they are in contact with strong or important points in the position. From a post which connects with such a point, a piece will automatically find another good post to move to.

For example, take this position:



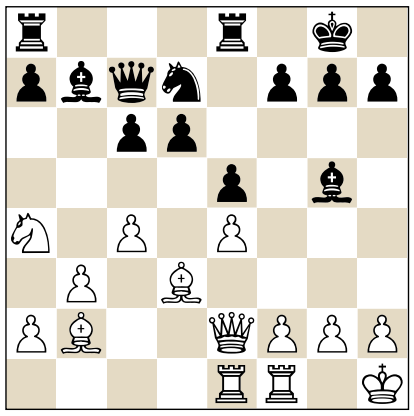
The knight on e2 is in contact with the important strategical point d4 (the blockading square in front of the IQP – another concept that Nimzowitsch popularised). From e2, the knight is well-placed to move to f4, c3 or g3.

1.♘d4

Occupying the strategically important d4-square, the knight is free to move to b5 (attacking the queenside) or f5 (attacking the kingside).

Nimzowitsch thus concludes that the more pieces in contact with a strategically important point, the better-placed this pieces will be. I'm not sure that the terminology and the somewhat overblown language really help convey the message, but to my mind Nimzowitsch is looking for a way to capture (and systemise) the essence of the play of Capablanca (his great contemporary), which was also a feature of the play of later greats such as Smyslov and Karpov: their ability to manage and maintain the inner harmony of their positions.

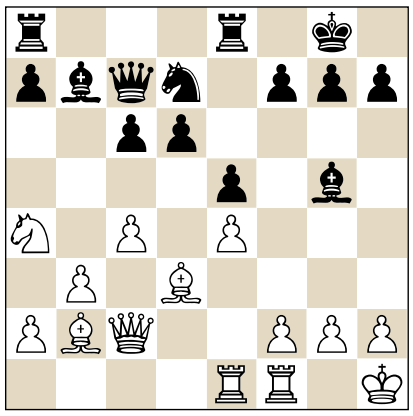
A few issues ago, I reviewed the ChessBase Master Class DVD on Karpov, and raved about Mihail Marin's analysis of Karpov's middlegame play. Marin showed how Karpov was able to move the same piece many times (seemingly aimlessly) in the middlegame and still mysteriously improve his position! The example against Stein is quite striking:



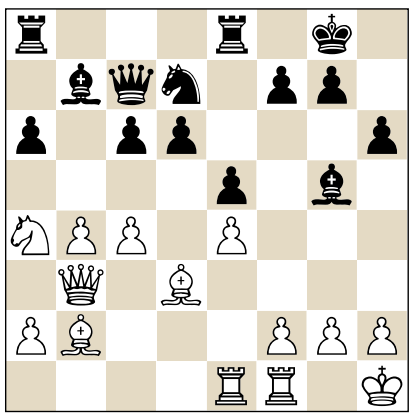
Karpov-Stein
Soviet Union 1971
position after 16...♗g5

It starts now. Take a look at the white queen!

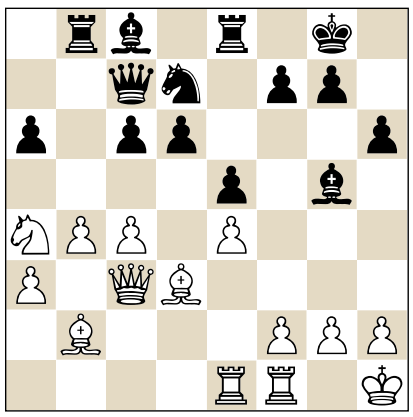
17.♕c2



First c2.
17...h6 18.b4 a6 19.♕b3



Now b3.
19...♖ab8 20.a3 ♗c8 21.♕c3



Then c3.
21...♗f6 22.♕c2
And now c2 again! Don't ask me how, but Black looks less well-developed than five moves ago! And when Black takes action on the queenside, White seems perfectly prepared for it! Witchcraft! (1-0, 47)

My theory is that Karpov could 'get away' with sequences like this because he sensed how to place his other pieces in such a way that they were ready to respond to a wide range of developments. I wouldn't claim that overprotection was the key to this example (though the queen, rook on e1 and light-squared bishop did converge on the e4-square before rushing to other good posts: the rook went to b1 supporting White's passed b-pawn, the bishop went to b5 and the queen went to b3). However, I could imagine using the concept of overprotection in some positions as a way of trying to ensure my pieces were coordinating properly and in contact with good posts.

Top-5 of most irritating books

My biggest criticism of Nimzowitsch's writings is that the practical examples he uses to illustrate his theories are generally pretty poor. This is especially the case in *Chess Praxis*, which has promoted itself to my top-5 of most irritating books! I've probably got into the wrong mood and can't get out of it, but I find it truly impossible to make any relation between Nimzowitsch's theories and his games in that book. Constantly being told 'Behold! The power of over-protection!' and not seeing anything resembling that in the moves in the game gives you the uncomfortable feeling of being taken for a ride.

At his best though, I find Nimzowitsch's writing evocative and thought-provoking.

Highlights

To round off, a little selection of the phrases I jotted down while reading the book:
'Many a freeing move merely leads to an unfavourable, premature opening of the game, while other freeing moves are to be seen as normal reactions and as such should be calmly accepted. For it would be foolhardy and presumptuous to contend against natural phenomena.'

'After the pawns are gone (e5) we must at least occupy the points with pieces!... It is true that it is precisely the pawns that are best suited to building up the centre since they are the most stable. But pieces stationed in the centre can very well take the place of pawns.'

'The outpost point on a flank file should be occupied by a heavy-calibre piece. The occupation of an outpost point with a knight would be of little significance for the attacking radius of this knight would be meagre.' (This is one I remember from the time I read *My System* as a teenager. I've used it many times!)

'If our g-pawn is lured away from its confederation of pawns, it will come under attack by a number of pieces. The obvious idea then is to win the pawn through an accumulation of attacking force – firstly for the sake of the gain in material, and secondly to break down the resistance along the file.
'This is handled technically by first bringing our pieces into an attacking position. Then there will be a heated struggle over the pawn. Black will defend as often as we attack, so now we try to gain a preponderance by eliminating his defenders, which can be accomplished by (1) driving them away, (2) exchanging them and (3) shutting off one of the defending pieces. Hence we transfer our attacking fury from the opponent himself to his defenders, a completely normal procedure often practiced at school (in schoolyard brawls of course).'

So what do we give these books? *Aron Nimzowitsch 1928-1935 Annotated Games and Essays* by Rudolf Reinhardt definitely gets 5 stars: it's a wonderful collection and a joy to read.

My System & Chess Praxis – His Landmark Classics in One Edition will have to get that too, especially for *My System*, which despite all its flaws should definitely be read at least once by all chess players! If anyone can make sense of *Chess Praxis*, then let me know! ■

Hans Ree

Living out of a suitcase

Ivan's Chess Journey – Games and Stories, written by Ivan Sokolov and published by his own firm Thinkers Publishing, is a quirky book. Yet, **HANS REE** feels that this disorganized mixed bag of stories and game analyses might, with some discipline, have made a good book.

'Can't you get a job there, too?' asked my wife. I had told her that Ivan Sokolov has been living in Dubai for the last few years, working as the national coach of the chess federation of the United Arab Emirates. Well, maybe if I applied for a position as Ivan's assistant, I might have a chance. 'Let's go there then', she said.

I told her that we would be lonely – 'We'll make new friends', she said – and that anyway I was so tied to the routines of my daily life that being uprooted from Amsterdam and replanted in Dubai would be a disaster. Ivan is much younger than me, I weakly pointed out in my defence.

That was true, but the real point is that he has a less conservative attitude to life. Both on the chessboard and in life he has always been more daring and energetic.

I had a quick glance at some websites about expat life in Dubai. It appeared more pleasant than I had expected. Apparently, there are a lot of good bookshops there, and some good people too, who cared not only about money but also about the environment and other social issues. But all in all, Dubai for Westerners seemed rather surreal, a fantasy city like a huge Las Vegas, with the difference that in Dubai people are supposed to earn money, whereas Las Vegas is set up to take them to the cleaners.

What I heard from people who have met Ivan in recent years, suggested that he is happy in Dubai, although he has not yet gained the proverbial 'Dubai stone', the seven kilogrammes of extra fat caused by luxurious living and a hot climate where walking is exceptional.

In the preface to this book, Sokolov writes: 'This slippery road (over the years) made me to live permanently on three different continents, getting two divorces, two wonderful kids and at the present moment of this writing, I reside in Dubai, being employed as a UAE national coach.'

A cheerful exile

So he lived courageously through all the stages – from courtship to divorce – which the American writer Norman Mailer found indispensable for really getting to know a woman. Mailer himself went a step further by trying to kill one of his wives.

By the way, Ivan only mentions Europe and Asia as the continents where he has lived. Somewhere in his book, in a game analysis, he repeatedly miscounts the number of pawns on the board. Would he miscount continents as well? That is hard to believe, but then, there's more than a touch of chaos to this book. The cover design is atrocious, the proofreader seems to have fallen asleep at page 1 and the sales price is a rip-off. It isn't even clear what the title is. On the cover it is *Ivan's Chess Journey – Games and Stories*, while inside it is presented as *Ivan's Chess Journey – Life and Stories*.

'Living out of a Suitcase', as one of the early chapters is called, is about the fateful year of 1992, when the Yugoslav wars reached his homeland of Bosnia. But 'homeland of Bosnia' is an anachronistic post-war expression, since Ivan considered himself a citizen of Yugoslavia.

At that time he was in Sarajevo, which came under siege. He had an invitation to a tournament in Barcelona, but there were no more civilian flights from Sarajevo, the trains did not run and the buses were unsafe. Somehow he got a seat on a military plane to Belgrade.

He had packed his suitcase for a regular trip under the illusion that everything would be back to normal in a few weeks. At the end of the tournament in Barcelona, the Bosnian war had escalated and he found it impossible to return to Sarajevo. With only his tournament earnings available, he cheerfully embraced the life of a wandering chess grandmaster.

As he tells earlier in the book, he met a Philippine girl at the Olympiad in Manila in 1992, where he played for the new state Bosnia and Herzegovina,

whom he would later marry. Chasing her as she travelled around the globe might explain the third continent.

He spent the summer of 1992 on the Faroe Islands, coaching some local players. He taught them good chess, they taught him salmon fishing. He writes: 'As a "foreign chess player" spending summer there, I was regarded almost as an "attraction" and was invited (by the locals) to their endless parties. I was 24 and enjoying life to the full extent of its joy. It was a wonderful summer...days were long and girls were blonde...'

A generous sprinkling of inverted commas, parentheses, smileys and other emoticons, often without rhyme or reason, is typical for this book.

He enjoyed himself during that year. There must have been worries about his homeland, but they are not mentioned. Maybe living out of a suitcase had become a state of mind.

'The cover design is atrocious, the proofreader seems to have fallen asleep at page 1 and the sales price is a rip-off. It isn't even clear what the title is.'

Dutch citizen

But you can't keep something like this up forever. Towards the end of 1992 Ivan realized that the war in Bosnia was far from over, and that he would need a residence permit in a Western country. Joop Piket, father of GM Jeroen Piket and at that time a member of the board of the Dutch chess federation, helped him to get one in the Netherlands. Ivan settled there near the end of 1992 and in 2001 he became a Dutch citizen.

In 1992 he was 24 years old and among the top-30 on the rating list. My own active chess career was nearing its end. I met him often, but we played only one serious game, in a club team match in 1996, which Ivan won solidly. Before that we had played blitz at the Junior World Championship in Baguio City in 1987, where I was Jeroen Piket's second.

With good reason Ivan calls it one of the strongest junior championships in the history of chess, with Anand, Gelfand, Ivanchuk and Akopian among the participants. At the start of the tournament Ivan had considered himself the favourite, but a new star was born there: Anand became Junior World Champion.

Spirited preparation

Being paired as Black against Genna Sosonko in the first round of his first Dutch Championship in 1994, Ivan was eager to spring a novelty in the Grünfeld on him. The day before the game he visited Jan Timman, who was not playing in the tournament, to have his novelty checked.

He writes: 'The former "Best of the West" welcomed me in a jovial mood... Ahaa Ivan, look, this is Meerlust Rubicon, an excellent wine from South Africa...yes...yes... interesting novelty... ahaa...let me give you some more wine... yes...sure...it will work perfectly against Genna(!)...should I open another bottle...? The more we were drinking, the more my novelty was looking better and better... The next day Sosonko needed only 45 minutes to dismantle the novelty and win the game.'

There is a mirror version of this scene later. At the Wijk aan Zee tournament of 1999, Sokolov had crushed Kasparov in 28 moves with a mating attack. A few days later Jan Timman was adamant that he would also mate Kasparov.

Ivan writes: 'We continued to drink wine and the more we drank, the more Garry's fate being mated tomorrow in a brutal Sicilian attack seemed to have been sealed! I woke up with a slight hangover the next morning...and...was wondering about my friend Jan.'

The outcome wasn't as bad as when Ivan played Sosonko. With White Timman forced a draw after 16 moves, and this may well have been his intention from the start. In a different context Ivan writes about his good friend: 'Jan was extremely good at fooling himself and even better at fooling others!'

Wandering again

Ivan was twice Dutch champion, played for the Netherlands in five Olympiads and was a member of the Dutch team that won the European Championship in 2005. In the plane on their way back to Amsterdam the team was greeted by the pilot. There was a press conference on Schiphol airport, Ivan was named an honorary citizen of the Dutch town of Lelystad and each player received a beautiful bunch of flowers.

But that was it: flowers, but no financial bonus. For him this was proof of the low social status of chess in the Netherlands, which may be why his relation with the Dutch chess federation remained lukewarm. In 2010, changing his federation once more, he played for Bosnia and Herzegovina again at the Olympiad. In 2012, the Netherlands were back in his favour, and in 2014 he was captain of the team of the Emirates, as he will be this year at the Olympiad in Baku.

I cherish the memories of the Amsterdam bar that we both frequented and where I have drunk more than a few glasses of the excellent Spanish wine he used to import into the Netherlands. The wine import was no financial success, and for completely unrelated reasons that bar has closed its doors. Ivan will pursue his journey and may reside anywhere in the coming years. I hope he'll choose the Netherlands again. ■

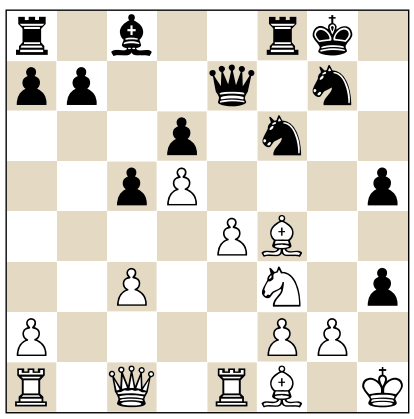
Jan Timman

The name had been changed to Xtracon Open, but the relaxed and convivial atmosphere remained very much the same, as **JAN TIMMAN** noted to his satisfaction on his return to his favourite summer tournament.

Summer outside the city

The Politiken Cup was based on a long tradition, whose format had remained virtually unchanged over the years. The only change in all this time was its move from Copenhagen to Helsingor nine years ago. To my mind, it was a change for the better, because the scene before Helsingor had been a drab Copenhagen suburb. This year saw a new main sponsor, a data-service company called Xtracon, as a result of which the tournament was renamed the Xtracon Open. Xtracon has its main office in Roskilde. The website still talks about the 'Copenhagen Chess Festival', but the event actually still took place in the Konventum, the conference centre on the outskirts of Helsingor, situated on a hill, surrounded by woodlands and with a majestic view of Sweden. After descending the stairs you find yourself on a beach from which you can see Kronborg, Hamlet's castle.

This year, there were just short of 400 participants, about 50 down on last year. This meant that it was not necessary to use another wing of the complex as a playing hall. Nor were there any 2700+ players this year, although Shirov and Fressinet might as well be regarded as such, because they have been part of that select club for many years. The first round saw no surprises, but there certainly could have been.

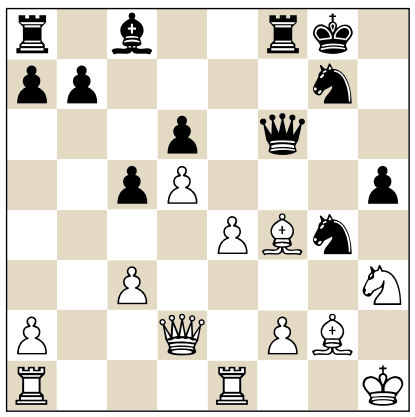


J.Bluebaum-Shirov
Helsingor 2016 (1)
position after 20...♘f6

The white player is Johanna Bluebaum, elder sister of Matthias, who would end up winning the tournament on Buchholz points. Shirov had played carelessly in the opening, and after the simple 21.gxh3 White would have been totally winning.

21.♘g5 There was no reason at all to protect the e-pawn.

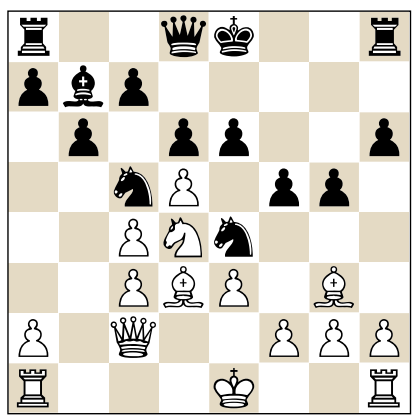
21...hxg2+ 22.♗xg2 ♘g4 23.♕d2 ♕f6 24.♘h3



24...♘xf2+!

And this will yield Black a pawn. Shirov managed to win the endgame.

Round 2 saw a theoretically important game.



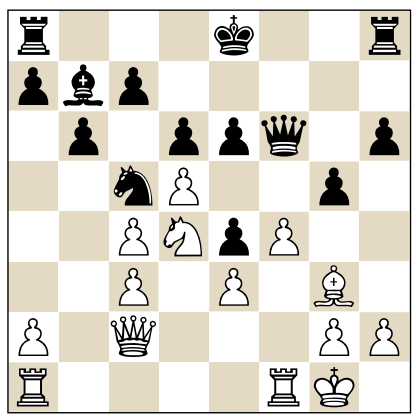
Vesterli-Hammer
Helsingor 2016 (2)
position after 13...♘ac5

14.0-0 An unusual continuation that might well be very strong.

14...♕f6 The standard reaction, which is probably not so good here. 14...♕e7 seems better.

15.♗xe4 fxe4 16.f4!

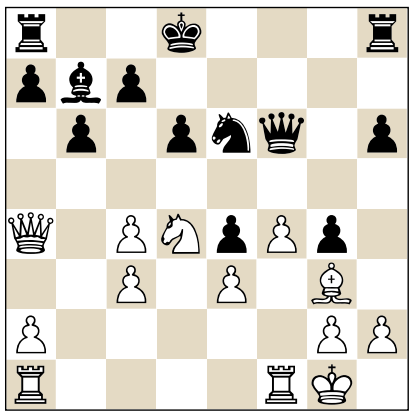
The point of White's play. He wants to open the f-file, after which the queen will be in an awkward position on f6.



16...g4 In Mchedlishvili-Jankovic, Dubai 2009, there followed 16...exd5

17.fxg5 ♕xg5 18.♖f4, with sharp play. The simple 17.cxd5 would have given White a clear positional plus. After 17...0-0-0 White continues with 18.c4, and Black has no counterplay. Hammer tries to keep the position closed, but he fails to solve his positional problems.

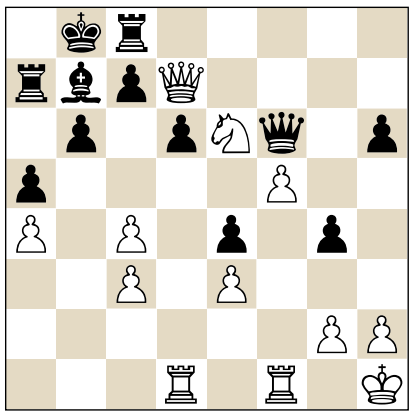
17.dxe6 ♘xe6 18.♕a4+ ♔d8



19.♗h4! This is the biggest problem. White gets a dominant knight.

19...♕xh4 20.♘xe6+ ♔c8 21.f5 ♕f6 22.♔h1 ♔b8 23.♕d7 ♖c8 24.♖ad1 a5 25.a4 ♖a7

A tactical error in a bad position.



26.♖xd6!

A hammer blow. The rook cannot be captured.

26...♕e5 27.♖d4

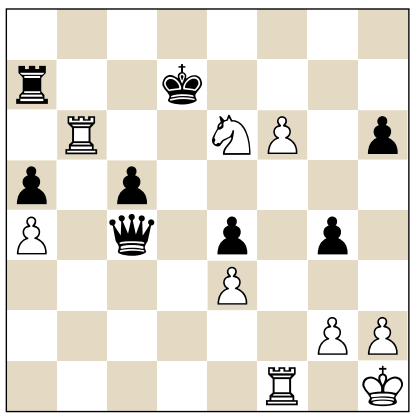
This allows Black counterplay. If White had withdrawn the rook to d1, Black would have been hopelessly lost.

27...c5 28.♖d6 ♗c6 29.♕xc8+ ♔xc8 30.♖xc6+ ♔d7 31.♖xb6 ♕xc3

Far too optimistic, but it turns out to be successful. Better was 31...♔e7, with a difficult defence.

32.f6 ♕xc4

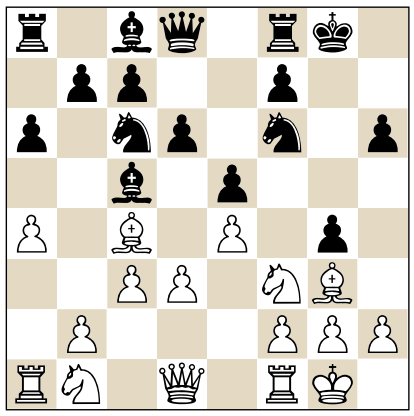
'After descending the stairs you find yourself on a beach from which you can see Kronborg, Hamlet's castle.'



33.♖d1+ Now the win is gone. White should have kept a cool head with 33.♔g1!, and wins. The rook should have stayed behind the f-pawn.

33...♔e8 34.♘g7+ ♔f7 35.♘f5 ♕e2 36.♘xh6+ ♔g6 37.f7+ ♔g7 38.♖db1 ♖d7 Now Black takes the initiative. **39.h4 gxh3 40.♖g1 ♖d1 41.gxh3+ ♖xg1+ 42.♔xg1 ♕xe3+ 43.♔g2 ♕f3+ 44.♔g1 e3 45.♘g4 ♕g3+** White resigned.

Last year, the young German Jan Christian Schröder surprised one and all by defeating Fressinet in Round 4. This year, they met again in the same round, and again Schröder came close to winning.

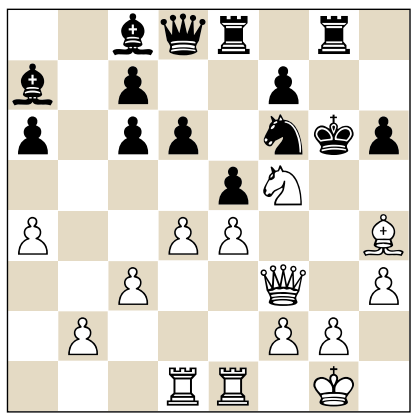


Schröder-Fressinet
Helsingor 2016 (4)
position after 10...g4

11.♗h4!

An amazing long-term piece sacrifice. Schröder later said that it had occurred in an earlier correspondence game, and that he had thoroughly prepared for it.

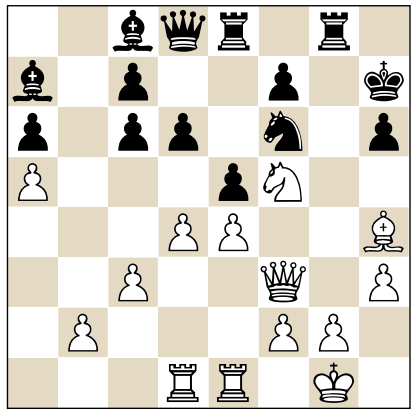
11...gxf3 12.♕xf3 ♔g7 13.♘d2 ♖g8 14.♖fe1 ♔g6 15.h3 ♗e6 16.♗d5 ♕e7 17.♘f1 ♖af8 18.♗xc6 bxc6 19.♘g3 ♖e8 20.d4 ♗a7 21.♖ad1 ♗c8 22.♘f5 ♕d8



23.a5

White had played very well so far, but this is a wasted move. Strong was 23.♖d3!, and if the play continues as in the game, White will be an important tempo up.

23...♔h7!

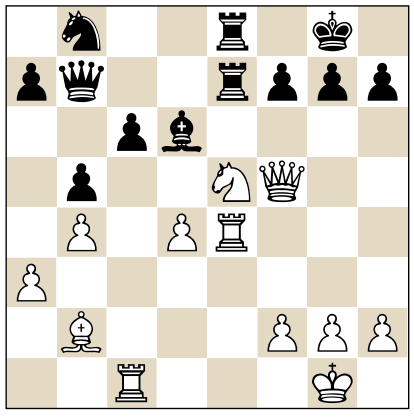


Now Black just manages to hold on. The fight remains sharp, and in the end, Schröder decides to go for move repetition in a sharp position that is probably equal.

24.dxe5 ♖xe5 25.♘xh6 ♖g6 26.♘xf7 ♕e7 27.♘xe5 ♕xe5 28.♖d3 ♘h5 29.♕f7+ ♖g7 30.♕f8 ♖g8 31.♕f7+ ♖g7 32.♕f8 ♖g8 33.♕f7+

Draw.

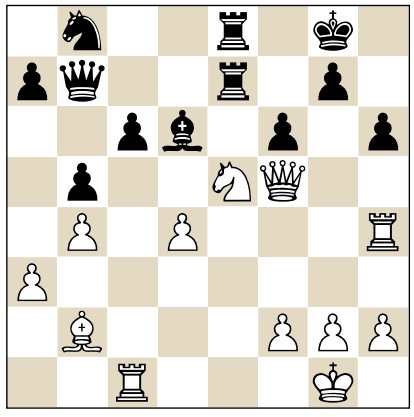
After five rounds, the surprising leader with a perfect score was another German: Erik Zude, a 51-year-old IM who plays in Helsingor every year. This year's event looked like turning into the tournament of his life. Against Marin he made a beautiful rook sacrifice.



Zude-Marin
Helsingor 2016 (4)
position after 22.♖xe4

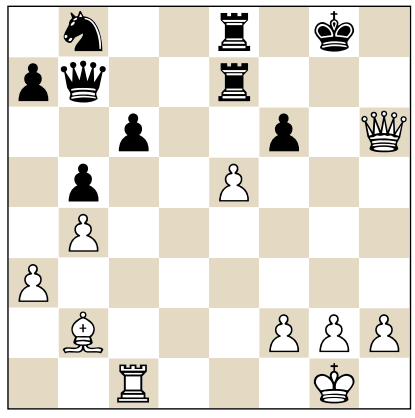
The position is equal. A reasonable move would have been 22...♘d7.

22...f6 Black ambitiously plays a risky move.
23.♖h4 Because this is the problem.
23...h6?
If Marin had had an inkling of what was coming, he would undoubtedly have gone for 23...g6, after which he would just be able to hang on with 24.♕xf6 ♘d7.



24.♖xh6!
White breaches the black defences with a rook sacrifice.

24...♗xe5 25.♕h7+ ♔f8 26.dxe5 gxh6 27.♕xh6+ ♔g8



28.♕g6+
Winning. Black is unable to interpose his rook.
28...♔f8 29.♕h6+ ♔g8 30.♕g6+ ♔f8 31.♕xf6+ ♖f7 32.♕h6+ ♖g7 33.e6 ♔g8 34.♖c5
Beset by time-trouble, White fails to find the most effective continuation. The text might have led to back-rank problems. After 34.g3 Black would have been on the ropes.

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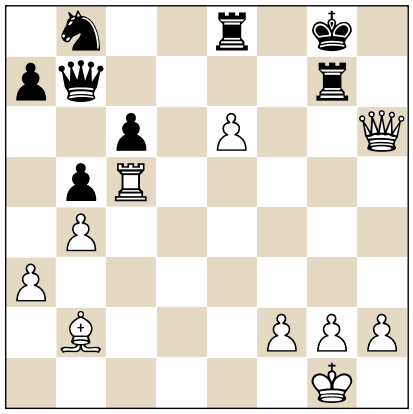
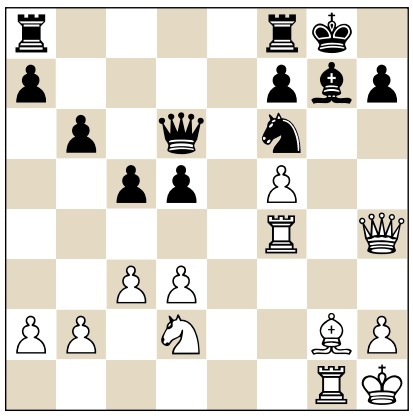


34...♖d8 In the heat of the battle, Black misses his chance. With 34...♕d7! he could have regrouped his defences successfully.
35.g3 ♖d1+ 36.♔g2 ♖d5 37.♖c3 c5 38.f3 c4 39.♖c2 ♖f5 40.♖f2 ♖f8 41.♕h5
Black had managed to generate some counterplay in time-trouble, but it turns out to be insufficient to save the game. White is still in control.
41...a6 42.♖e2 ♖h7 43.♕g4+ ♖g7 44.♕h5 ♖h7 45.♕g4+ ♖g7 46.♗xg7 ♕xg7 47.e7 ♖e8 48.♕e6+ ♕f7 49.♕d6 ♔g7 50.♖e4 ♕f5 51.♖g4+ ♔h7 52.♖f4 Black resigned.

In Round 6, Zude went under against the Egyptian GM Bassem Amin.

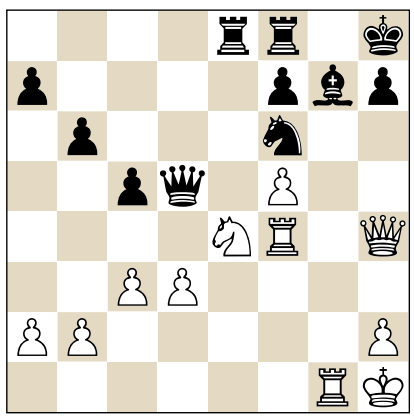


Amin-Zude
Helsingor 2016 (6)
position after 21.♖g1

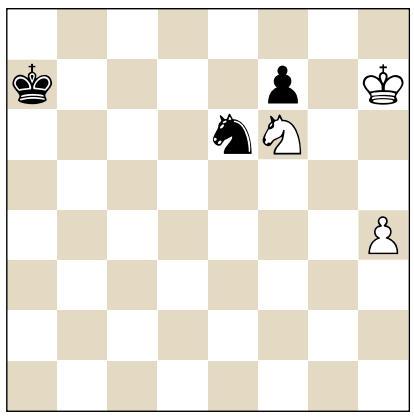
White has just played his rook to g1, introducing a threat.
21...♖ae8 Zude doesn't see it! But even on general grounds, 21...♔h8 would have been the correct move to make it more difficult for White to launch an attack. **22.♗xd5!** The start of an attractive combination.

The top finishers in Helsingor: Bassem Amin (3), Matthias Bluebaum (1) and Alexey Shirov (2).

22...♕xd5+ 23.♘e4 ♔h8



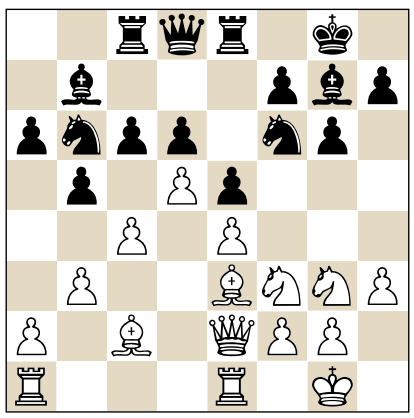
24.♖xg7! The real point. White is totally winning, but Zude defended tenaciously. Helped by Amin's time-trouble, Black managed to reach a tenable endgame.
And then this happened.



position after 53.♔h7

It goes without saying that Black should now go 53...♘f4 in order to stop the h-pawn. But he played: **53...♔b7? 54.h5** And White won.

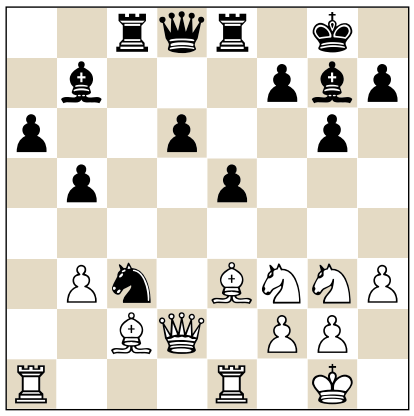
After winning his Round 7 game as well, Amin took the lead, but then his engine stalled: his final three games only yielded as many draws, so that he was eventually overtaken by no fewer than six other players. With the differences in the Buchholz score so slight, however, it remained a tense battle until the very end, with the 19-year-old Bluebaum ending up half a Buchholz point ahead of Shirov and Amin. Bluebaum played solidly, but I saw nothing special from him. Shirov played his usual edge-of-the-precipice chess. In the final round, too, he took risks.



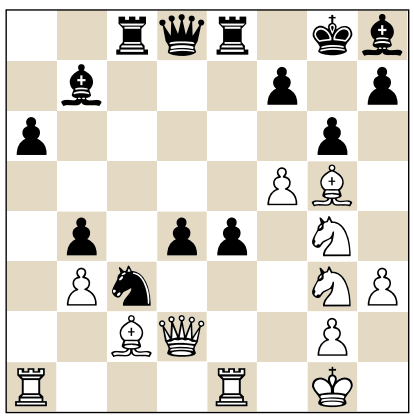
Shirov-Tarjan
Helsingor 2016 (10)
position after 19.♕e2

A standard position from the Breyer Variation of the Ruy Lopez. Now Tarjan

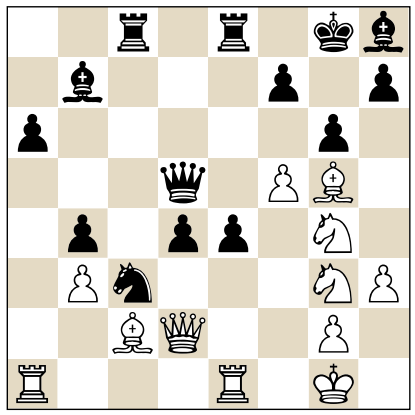
makes a well-known piece sacrifice.
19...cxd5 20.cxd5 ♘bxd5 21.exd5 ♘xd5 22.♖ac1 ♘c3
Black's mighty central pawns give him good compensation. In addition, his knight has found a solid foothold.
23.♕d2 ♘xa2
The computer prefers 23...b4 to consolidate the knight's foothold.
24.♖a1 ♘c3



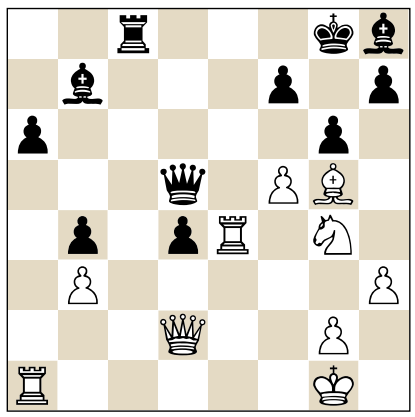
25.♗h6 And here he wants to go 25.b4 in order to vacate square b3 for his king's bishop. But Shirov has immediate attacking plans.
25...♗h8 26.♘h2 b4 27.♘g4 d5 28.f4
The start of an all-out attack, burning all White's bridges, since Black's central pawns will become unstoppable.
28...e4 29.f5 d4 30.♗g5



30...♕d5?
The wrong square for the queen. Both 30...♕d6 and 30...♕b6 would have been good enough to contain the white attack, with the sharp 30...f6 probably being the strongest option, since 31.♗h6 g5 will make it impossible for White to continue his attack with normal means; Black is better.



31.♘xe4! The start of an elegant mating combination.
31...♖xe4 32.♗xe4 ♘xe4 33.♖xe4



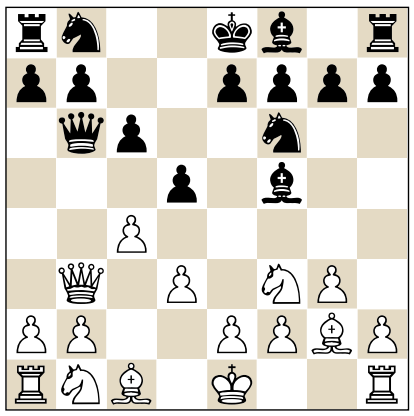
33...h5 Desperation. The point of the combination would have become clear after 33...♕xe4 34.♖e1 ♕d5 35.♖e8+! ♖xe8 36.♘h6+ ♔g7 37.f6+ ♔f8 38.♕xb4+, followed by mate.
34.♘h6+ ♔h7 35.♖e7 gxf5 36.♘xf7 Black resigned.

I was not too unhappy about my own result. If you haven't played a tournament in ages, you can't complain about finishing half a point behind the winners. I played a few good positional games.

In Round 7 I played the following game against Jonathan Carlstedt, a 25-year-old IM from Germany.

RE 6.1 – A07
Jan Timman
Jonathan Carlstedt
Helsingor 2016 (7)

1.♘f3 d5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 ♗f5 4.c4 c6 5.♕b3
According to the latest theoretical insights, White should not swap on d5 first, since 5.cxd5 cxd5 6.♕b3 ♘c6! 7.♕xb7 ♗d7 would give Black excellent compensation for the pawn.
5...♕b6 6.d3



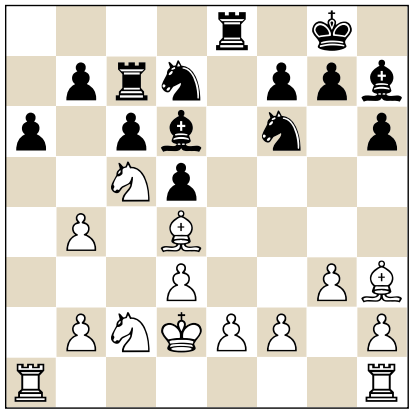
6...♘bd7 Unusual, and probably insufficient for equality. Carlstedt said afterwards that he had thought better of the usual 6...e6 in view of a game between two Chinese players. He was

Helsingor 2016

1	Matthias Bluebaum	GER	2618	8
2	Alexey Shirov	LAT	2674	8
3	Bassem Amin	EGY	2654	8
4	Jonathan Carlstedt	GER	2457	8
5	Mihail Marin	ROU	2576	8
6	Jon Ludvig Hammer	NOR	2652	8
7	Jean-Marc Degraeve	FRA	2579	8
8	Alexey Dreev	RUS	2664	7½
9	Sebastien Mazé	FRA	2628	7½
10	Jan Timman	NED	2559	7½
11	Allan Stig Rasmussen	DEN	2504	7½
12	Daniel Naroditsky	USA	2634	7½
13	Simen Agdestein	NOR	2603	7½
14	Vladimir Burmakin	RUS	2549	7½
15	Tanguy Ringoir	BEL	2474	7½
16	Laurent Fressinet	FRA	2677	7½
17	Evgeny Vorobiov	RUS	2584	7½
18	Rasmus Svane	GER	2549	7½
19	Mads Andersen	DEN	2525	7½
20	Koen Leenhouts	NED	2491	7½
21	Joseph McPhillips	ENG	2341	7½
22	Axel Delorme	FRA	2514	7½
23	Andriy Vovk	UKR	2637	7
24	Sabino Brunello	ITA	2567	7
25	Julio Granda Zuniga	PER	2699	7
26	Jan-Christian Schröder	GER	2507	7
27	Lars Schandorff	DEN	2521	7
28	Hjorvar Steinn Gretarsson	ISL	2550	7
29	Kristian Stuvik Holm	NOR	2411	7
30	Vilka Sipila	FIN	2458	7
31	James Tarjan	USA	2447	7

398 players, 10 rounds

referring to Wang Yue-Lu Shanglei, Danzhou 2015, which White had won in impressive fashion. After 1.c4 c6 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.g3 d5 4.♗g2 ♗f5 5.♕b3 ♕b6 6.d3 e6 7.♗e3 ♕xb3 8.axb3 a6 9.♘c3 h6 10.cxd5 exd5 11.♘d4 ♗h7 12.♘c2 ♘bd7 13.b4 ♖c8 14.♘a4 ♗d6 15.♘c5 ♖c7 16.♗h3 0-0 17.♔d2 ♖e8 18.♗d4



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

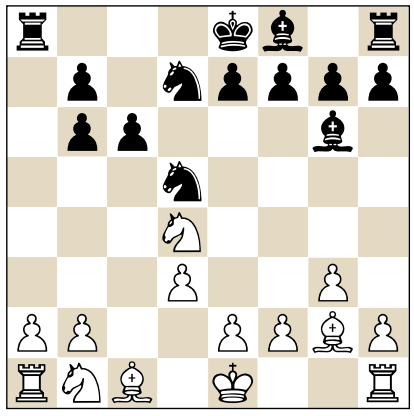
White had a clear positional advantage, although the computer assesses the position as equal. This is because it doesn't see that the black queen's bishop is biting on granite. This theme also plays a part in the present game.

7.♕xb6 axb6 8.cxd5 The correct plan but the wrong move order. White should have gone 8.♘d4! first.

8...♘xd5 This is possible because 9.e4 can be met strongly by 9...♘b4.

9.♘d4 ♗g6

9...♘b4! would also have been good now. The text is what I had hoped for.



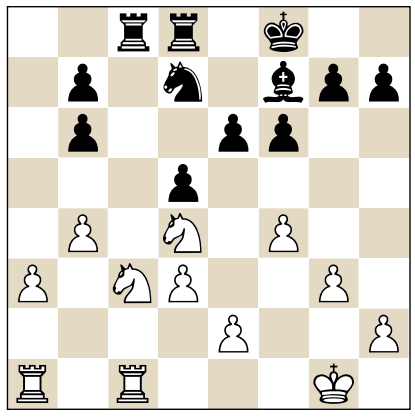
10.♗xd5! It doesn't often happen in the Réti Slav that you swap your fianchettoed bishop for a knight, but here it is strategically justified. Black remains stuck with doubled b-pawns. This is not always a problem in this kind of position, but here the white knights firmly control square b5, and the black queen's bishop will remain cut off for a long time.

10...cxd5 11.♘b5 ♖c8 12.♘1c3 e6 13.0-0 ♗e7 14.♗e3 0-0 15.♖fc1 ♗f6 16.f4 Strengthening control in the centre. **16...♖fd8 17.♗d4 ♗e7 18.♘a4 ♗c5 19.a3** White is slowly making progress. He is going to force a bishop swap.

19...f6 20.b4 ♗xd4+ 21.♘xd4 ♗f7

The alternative was 21...e5, but after 22.fxe5 fxe5 23.♘e6 ♖xc1+ 24.♖xc1 ♖e8 25.♖c7 ♖xe6 26.♖xd7 ♗e8 27.♖d8 ♔f7 28.♘c3 Black's problems will not have been solved.

22.♘c3 ♔f8



23.f5!

With the strategic aim of conquering square d4 as a foothold for the white knights.

23...e5

This loses at once. Black should have settled for 23...exf5 or 23...♔e7, but I can understand why Carlstedt was not happy to defend this position.

24.♘e6+ ♗xe6 25.fxe6 ♘b8 26.♘xd5

Of course. White is going to liquidate to a totally winning rook ending.

26...♖xc1+ 27.♖xc1 ♘c6 28.♖xc6

Black resigned. ■

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JUST CHECKING

Jonathan Speelman

CURRENT ELO: 2526

DATE OF BIRTH: October 2, 1956

PLACE OF BIRTH: London, UK

PLACE OF RESIDENCE: London, UK

What is your favourite colour?
Blue.

What kind of food makes you happy?
Good veggie food – Veggie Moussaka say – or dips, especially houmous.

And what drink?
Beer or red wine.

Who is your favourite author?
At the moment Ben Aaronovich as in the *Rivers of London* series.

What was the best book you ever read?
The Master and Margarita by Mikhail Bulgakov.

What is your all-time favourite movie?
Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

What is your favourite TV series?
Almost any decent detective series and *Hyperdrive* (it helps to be British to appreciate this old series – the HMS Camden Lock attempts to sell British goods to aliens).

Do you have a favourite actor?
Alan Rickman.

And a favourite actress?
Juliet Stevenson.

What music do you like to listen to?
Rock music from the 60's and 70's.

Do you have a favourite painter?
Pablo Picasso.

What is your best result ever?
Getting through the Candidates the first time round as far as the semis in 1988 – my first match with Nigel Short.

What was your best game?
Lots of nice ones but sadly mostly 'unsound'. Kortchnoi-JS, Brussels 1988, was fun – shame about 16.♕c4!. My best ever move was also unsound – ♘a2?!!? against Psakhis.

Who is your favourite chess player?
Misha Tal, because not only was he a genius but he also adored chess.

Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?
As a kid Peter Clarke's book on Tal and *Larsen's Selected Games* were two of my favourites.

What are chess players particularly good at (except for chess)?
Lots of excellent linguists. And pattern recognition in a variety of contexts.

Do chess players have typical shortcomings?
Chess fosters extreme self-reliance, which is a wonderful thing in some ways but can be tiresome too.

Do you have any superstitions concerning chess?
Used to have a battle pen but not now – often tie shoelaces before a game.

Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?
I'm happy in my skin but if I weren't a chess player I'd have liked to be a decent mathematician.

Which three people would you like to invite for dinner?
Einstein, Picasso, Marilyn Monroe (not I hope unkind to outnumber such a feisty and clever woman).

What is the best piece of advice you were ever given?
Re chess to be self-reliant – also applies to life generally though harder to implement.

Is there something you'd love to learn?
I wish I were a better linguist.

What is your greatest fear?
The usual things. Dementia must be almost the worst thing that can happen to a person but happily it seems to be exceedingly rare among chess players.

How do you relax?
Crosswords, number puzzles including killer sudokus (the ones where you have to do arithmetic rather than just playing with symbols), computer strategy games (various iterations of *Civilization* and now *Galactic Civilization*), reading, flobbering in front of the television and socialising generally.

What is the stupidest rule in chess?
Zero tolerance by a country mile.

Is a knowledge of chess useful in everyday life?
The ability to become good at anything can be translated into different spheres. Chess as such isn't useful in itself though among other things you have to learn to calculate the consequences of actions, which is a skill which, for example, is sadly missing in many of our glorious politicians.

What is the best thing that was ever said about chess?
Nothing immediately came to mind so I googled. Tartakower's 'Chess is a fairy tale of 1001 blunders' is especially nice.

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-Chess Today

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